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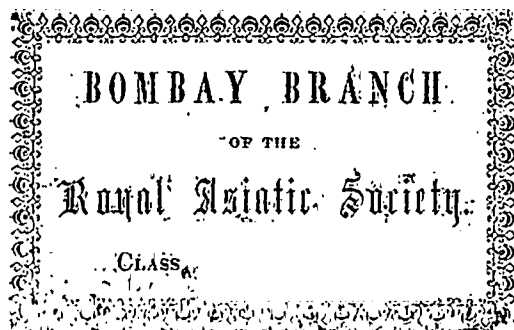
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HUMAN LIFE & ITS CONDITIONS

CHURCH

HUMAN LIFE AND ITS CONDITIONS

SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1876-1878

WITH

THREE ORDINATION SERMONS

BY

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acc

R. W. CHURCH, M.A., D.C.L.

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S

HONORARY FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD

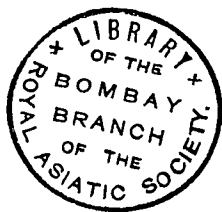
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NOTICE.

OF the following sermons, the first four were preached before the University at St. Mary's, in the author's turns as Select Preacher during the years 1876, 1877, 1878.

The remaining three were preached at general Ordinations held at St. Paul's, Salisbury, and Wells. They were published at the time, and are now reprinted.

March 1878.

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SERMON I.

SUPREMACY OF GOODNESS.

ST. MARK x. 17, 18.

And when He was gone forth into the way, there came to Him one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

IT is no wonder that this incident, which has also come down to us outside the records of the three Evangelists,¹ should have made a deep impression on the early Christian mind. The direct and definite form of the enquiry on the gravest subject of personal concern,—the character of the enquirer, the natural mixture in it of sincerity and shallowness, and the charm which, in spite of its weakness, attracted the sympathy and even the love of our Lord,—

¹ See a quotation from Evang. Hebr. in Orig. in Matt. tom. xv. No. 14 (vol. iii. 671).

the abrupt and unexpected test applied to the soundness of the enquirer's purpose,—the failure and the disappointment,—the wide and alarming moral drawn from the result,—the uncertainty and anxiety in which the incident and the comment on it seemed to leave the familiar conditions of human life,—all these combined to invest it at once with the interest of a pathetic and affecting story, and of a grave declaration of our Lord's mind and judgment. It was an example of His way of doing one part of the teacher's office ; of challenging and disquieting superficial ideas where great things are at stake ; of probing and exposing what people are too easily satisfied with ; of revealing to the enquirer how far short he still was from his own aim and thought—of startling him from his dream of perfection—of unmasking the decay and unsoundness of a moral life, in which effort and the desire of improvement had ceased under the spell of an easily satisfied conscience. But it was also an occasion for enforcing and driving home a great lesson,—no

new one, indeed, for the experience of mankind had been preaching it from of old, but one which our Lord's coming and teaching were to make certain—that in the kingdom which is *not* of this world, the command of the powers which *are* of this world, that command which is represented by riches, *must* be a subordinate possession, and *may* easily be a fatal one.

I only propose to-day to pursue the thought suggested by our Lord's remarkable address in the text. To the courteous and reverential words of the enquirer, His rejoinder sounds at once harsh and paradoxical. 'Good Master:—' 'Why callest thou Me good?' Why not the word to such as He, from one who could so appreciate His spirit and authority; whose temper seemed so in harmony with the governing purpose of His ministry; whose sense of the excellence of His teaching, and whose willingness to be taught, were unconsciously shown in the attitude in which he came as a learner—'running to Him,' 'kneeling to Him'? But he is met with a reply which may carry many meanings,

from rough rejection to grave remonstrance, according as we represent to ourselves the feeling of the speaker ; but which at any rate is not the sort of reply which the enquirer looked for, or which at first sight seems a natural one.

But it is only at first sight, I think, that there is anything difficult or surprising in it. ‘Why callest thou Me good?’ We need not think of an impossible disclaimer of goodness in Himself, of an inconceivable denial of goodness, in some sense and measure, to men—to the ‘honest and good heart,’ to the Israelite without guile, to ‘the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and whose delight is in the law of the Lord.’ In our own experience it has been no uncommon thing, I suppose, when grave and difficult matters have been in question, and we have been speaking of them with the looseness and carelessness of youth,—carelessness, of which, alas! old age does not always cure us,—when we have talked too fast, and were committing ourselves to more than we could make good,—to find ourselves checked and

as it were pulled up, by those wiser and more thoughtful than ourselves, for the confusions of our language and the 'shortness' and shallowness of our thoughts. It was the case here. Our Lord had before Him an enquirer who plainly was infinitely far from having duly measured the greatness of his own question, and *who* was to answer it; one, apparently, eager, forward, open to strong impressions, perhaps enthusiastic, perhaps quietly self-satisfied, but who had not that real love of goodness and that deep idea of the truth of things, which could make him capable of a strong effort and a great resolution. It is idle to attempt to fill up the outline of his character. But so much is clear: that our Lord saw in him one who had lightly and with a thin staple of thought and self-knowledge asked his momentous question, and whose good intentions far outran his grasp of its meaning and his power to face the answer. Our Lord did what we have so often seen done. '*Good Master*'—do you know what you are speaking about? have you thought of the meaning of your

words? Your mind is full of vague ideas of 'good'—of your own goodness, of something good which I am to tell you to do, and which you will forthwith do, of the good which you are to gain under the hope of eternal life, of the goodness which you ascribe as a matter of course to Me. 'Good,' which it is so easy a thing to say, and which must be at the bottom of what you profess to seek,—have you ever asked yourself *why* you apply it, and what goodness really is? For it is the greatest and highest thing in the world.—'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.' You, who use the word so freely, you are wasting, as a mere title of courtesy, *what is the highest attribute of God.*—'Why,' according to the alternative reading in St. Matthew, 'why askest thou Me about good?' You open, without thinking where you are going, a question which ends only in the Perfection of God Himself. That word, so thoughtlessly used, of such poor things and with such poor meanings,—really the most sacred of words and things—*only God has it.* Goodness,

that by which God is God,—which if He had it not, not all power, not all wisdom, could make Him God, His special mark, His peculiar and unapproachable excellence,—have you yet thought of what it really means, and what place it holds in the constitution of the world, and in the very essence of its Maker and Lord?

The answer was addressed to two great deficiencies in the enquirer's character and mind. (1) His standard and level of goodness was too low and too conventional—of what was good in himself, of the good to be aimed at, of the distance at which he stood from the fountain and model of goodness. And (2) his sluggishness of will and effort was unequal to the task on which he had entered, and the race which he professed to be running; and his mind and conscience had to be disturbed and alarmed by presenting before it the call that a real estimate and sense of *what goodness means* would make upon it. To be what he proposed to be, to be what he asked about, to have that which he supposed he saw in our Lord, was nothing less

than to aim at being 'perfect, as the Father in heaven is perfect.'

But our Lord's words have a more general interest, and it lies, I suppose, in this: that they are one of the numberless ways in which He enforced the same great lesson, of the supreme value in His eyes, of Goodness, above everything else that man can aim at or know or have, above every other principle or endowment of our human nature. We see in these words the characteristic of His teaching, the broad, unqualified, unvarying assumption, that the measure and standard of everything in man's life and actions is that goodness by which, at however great a distance, he approaches the moral nature of his God and Father in Heaven. And as with our Lord's own teaching, so with those great ideas and ruling principles which He implanted in the society which He set up to carry on His work in the world, and which that society was to develop and apply. As far as they relate to the estimate and conduct of human life, they revolve, so to say, about

the idea of goodness, of sanctity. The idea of goodness had in Christianity a clear sharp decisive primacy, which it never had in any other system, and which surprised and perplexed the world. It was not a word but a thing, deep, complete, fruitful, capable of indefinite expansion and growth. In its action on the world, Christianity, in its design and tendency, may be called the restoration of goodness ;—its restoration to its true place among the objects of human honour and interest, its restoration as a power of wide and real influence in the future education of mankind, in building up character, in redeeming men from unhappiness and ruin. It was a great effort in behalf of goodness, as Rome was a great effort for power, and Greece a great effort for philosophy. Goodness, in the teaching of Christianity, was no vague, sentimental shadow of excellence. It had a very strongly marked pattern and standard, the life and mind and self-sacrificing love of the Son of God. What it meant by goodness was drawn out by

its teachers in very definite and very practical particulars — ‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, faith, meekness, temperance’ — ‘whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’ The stress which its preachers lay on goodness, in its highest aspirations and in its minutest duties, is everywhere connected with the remembrance they make of the new disclosure in the Gospel of the amazing doings of God. ‘Slaves are to be obedient to their masters, to please them well, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity—*for*, the peace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.’ ‘It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing ; *for* Christ also hath once

suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.' And what are the enemies which it fears?—Not the overwhelming powers which confront it in the world, not the strength of those who can kill the body; 'but the lusts which war against the soul'—the tremendous and subtle activity engaged on the side of evil custom, the selfishness, the hatred, the pride, the unfathomable ambitions which lord it over the heart of man, and trample on his conscience, and dim the light of truth and reason. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places:' against whom the only protection is the 'whole armour of God,'—the 'girdle of truth' and the 'breastplate of righteousness,' and the ready steps of the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith, and that which from end to end witnesses the supreme blessedness of doing right at any cost—the 'sword of the Spirit, the word of God.'

The world is full of the shadows of God's great attributes. It is full of the shadows of His power, appealing to men's passionate admiration, waking up their longings :—the greatness of things *seen*. It is affectation to deny the power over our imagination even of the more vulgar forms of magnificence and splendour which meet our eyes ; great displays of wealth, and what wealth can create ; a great military or civil spectacle ; the forms and pomp of a great court, and the gathering in it of a nation's, perhaps of the world's, most famous, or most honoured and venerable names ; the stirring of heart and enthusiasm of a great crowd. But in these, though there is a fascination, we know it is *but* a fascination ; with all their imposing magnificence, they are obviously but a show and a scene. But there are two forms of outward and visible greatness, which affect a sense in us more inward, more complex, more subtle and refined. There is the greatness of nature, in its immensity *as seen*, in its still more overpowering immensity *as thought of* : in

its immensity of vastness, and its immensity of more than microscopic minuteness, never failing in perfectness of finish as far down as we can trace it: the greatness of nature in its simplicity at once and infinite complexity; in the variety and strange affinities of its forces, the wondrous names of light, and heat, and electricity; in its endless profusion of forms and functions; and in the awful and overwhelming phenomenon of life: the greatness of nature in that strange thing which we call beauty, touching so many different chords within us; the various beauty—and we certainly have a meaning when we use the word—of the sunrise and the sunset, of countenance, of expression, of character, of thought, of music, streaming in through such different channels, sight and sound and inward feeling, so certain a thing, yet so inexplicable. But nature is not ours. Though we can survey it, learn about it, enjoy it, use it, direct and balance some of its forces, we are cut off from it by a gulf which we cannot pass: we cannot arrest

its movements nor alter its lightest law. But there is another visible greatness which man *can* create and call his own: that which he can call into being by his powers of invention, of association, of arrangement, of organisation, of order and rule; the community, the state, the great system of trade, the venerable fabric of law, the conquests of the agriculturist, the engineer, the manufacturer, the habits and faculties of government, the Empire, the glory of great struggles fought through and great dangers surmounted, the immense achievement of liberty, security, and peace. These things, these noble names, which the Roman state printed on its coinage, are indeed part of man's greatness. To be a citizen of such a city is to have no mean portion in this world. To contribute to such greatness and to wield it, it would be foolish to think little of. But after all, in its best forms it is not an adequate portion. It passes away, and man does not. When on the Mount of Temptation the Saviour had before Him all the kingdoms of the world

and the glory of them—those that were then, and those that are—He beheld a goodly and wondrous spectacle. But He answered to what we feel to be the true ideal of man, to what alone is manlike and worthy of man, in spurning it all, for one word or act of sin.

There is another and higher order of excellence and greatness which is a shadow and reflection of God's *wisdom*: the things not of sight but of thought: man's prerogative of seeing and knowing with the inward light of his mind: and the shadows and reflections of God's wisdom are more truly man's than the shadows of God's power. Man ascends above the level of things seen, even of the forces and vastness of the outward world, because he can feel and think, and understand and imagine, and discover. 'Feeble as a reed,' says Pascal, 'it does not need the universe to crush him; a breath of vapour, a drop of water, is enough to destroy him. But he is a reed *that thinks*: and were the whole universe to crush him, he is above that which

destroys him ; for *he knows* that he dies ; and that which crushes him '—the storm, the torrent, or the lightning—'knows nothing.' He can compare, and estimate, and judge : and he knows that he judges rightly in setting above the things that are seen, in nobleness and worth, that which belongs to his inward nature, his intelligence and reason, its capacities, its achievements, its delights. He knows that in preferring them to what is outward and tangible, to the things which interest and tempt the many, he is choosing what best becomes him, as a man. In following truth along any of its lines, in gaining a clearer and wider view of things as they really are, in enlarging his thoughts of the place where he is and of his place in it, in seeking and rejoicing in the light, he is using the power with which he has been endowed, of recognising and sharing in his degree the thoughts of his Maker. In these gifts, and in the use and enjoyment of them, man is indeed great. Our own times are not backward or niggard in acknowledg-

ment: but more religious times than ours were not less eloquent in their admiration of the intellectual rank and greatness of man. Those ancient books which represent Jewish thought, when it first began to turn itself inward in philosophical reflection on its own workings, are full of the praises of Wisdom, which though it means much more, means all this. 'I called unto God, and the spirit of wisdom came unto me. I preferred her before sceptres and thrones, and esteemed riches as nothing in comparison of her. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light: for the light that cometh from her never goeth out. . . . God granted me to speak as I would, and to conceive as is meet for the things that are given me: . . . for He hath given me certain knowledge of the things that are, namely, to learn how the world was made, and the operation of the elements; the circuit of the years and the position of the stars: the nature of living creatures . . . the violence of winds and the

reasonings of men . . . and all such things as are either secret or manifest, them I know.' 'I came forth,' saith Wisdom, 'from the mouth of the Most High. . . . I dwelt in high places, and my throne is in a cloudy pillar. I alone compassed the circuit of heaven, and walked in the bottom of the deep. In the waves of the sea, and in all the earth, and in every people and nation, I gat me a possession. . . . The first man knew her not perfectly, neither shall the last find her out. For her thoughts are more than the sea, and her counsels profounder than the great deep.'

Real, indeed, and incomparably precious and noble are these gifts of thought and imagination, by which man makes his own the fragments and reflections of God's wisdom, the wisdom of the All-Wise: and men are not indisposed to set their full value upon them. Here at any rate we are under no temptation to underrate what makes men intellectually higher than their fellows, and gives them a great place among 'those who know.' But it

is one of the most common and most serious dangers of human opinion that these great gifts of our nature are the highest of what it can reach to; that nothing can be put in comparison with their claims on our homage, with their transcendent excellence. Against this, the consideration that they are but fragmentary, that we know 'in part' only, is perhaps beside the purpose: our whole condition is but 'in part.' But what is essential is, that they are—may it not be said, almost to any extent—compatible with evil. The great endowments of intelligence have indeed a natural affinity with all that is best in our nature; we feel that they are in their true place and doing their perfect work, when they are allied with conscience and duty, with purity and righteousness, with the love and service of God—that idea of 'Wisdom' in the book of Proverbs and those which copy it. There is a kind of profanation felt when we see them stained with evil or given to its service. Still we know but too well that they may be so.

History is stern and decisive in its verdict ; the history of art, of literature, of political activity, must it not be added, the history of religion. It shows us high gifts pulled down from their place and out of their true use by perverse wills and corrupted hearts ; it shows them in all their grandeur and power joined with a poor and mean character, with pride and malignity, with the very loathsomeness of vice. That intellectual strength and fertility cannot be the summit of human nature which lends itself so easily to such degradation : say what we will, our conscience revolts at taking this for the highest and most precious of man's possessions and attainments. And though in our judgment of persons, we shall do wisely to exercise to the full the charities due from our own half-knowledge and imperfection, there cannot be a greater heresy against reason and the sacred faith in righteousness, than to think that the greater gifts carry with them diminished responsibilities and larger license ; that a life that otherwise would be at once

condemned may be forgiven for the splendour which surrounds its vices.

There is another order of greatness: the greatness of doing right, the greatness of a good life, the greatness of duty and conscience, the greatness of wishing to be good. It is seen among us often as a disguised and discrowned greatness. But St. Paul was as great in his own order as Newton was in his; and that which made St. Paul great was as far and as distinct from that which made Newton great, as Newton's greatness was apart from and perhaps incomprehensible to the mighty and rich of this world.¹ And St. Paul's greatness was the greatness of the *man himself*, not merely of his endowment; the greatness of the purified and regenerate will, the enlarged and quickened affections, the steady and secure loyalty to what he ought to do. And just as it would have made no difference to the greatness of Newton if his intellect had been clothed by the humblest surroundings, so in that order of

¹ I am of course only repeating Pascal, 'Faugère,' ii. 331.

greatness in which St. Paul was great it would have been no matter if he had been in the eyes of the world as insignificant and commonplace as he describes himself. In the eyes of the Great Master, and before the conscience and heart of man, St. Paul's order of greatness, the greatness of goodness, of that which all human souls down to the humblest have within their reach, is truly the highest of all things that man knows of or that man can have.

We must often, unconsciously perhaps, have passed from our judgment and feelings about the thinker and the man of genius, to our judgment and feelings about the saint. The transition, it may be, has been a sharp one: we have had as it were to adjust afresh the focus in which we view them. We have had before us on one side mental power and grasp, almost terrible in its compass and penetration, and in its facility and unerring precision; and we have seen with it a cold and cruel heart, steeped in selfishness, false, unjust, spiteful:

and on the other a mind of very ordinary and it may be humble faculties, but of which the perpetual and living law was that of innocence and righteousness ; where we felt secure of unselfishness, self-mastery, sympathy, tenderness, generosity, faithfulness ; secure that not only in this or that affection, in this or that range of duties, but wherever tried, we might count on the man choosing his part rightly and nobly ; not too gentle for boldness and truthfulness, not too just to be patient and merciful. We are very unhappy if in our experience we have not known such a one, to learn from, to rejoice in, to revere. The intellectual superiority of the one, the moral height of the other, are incommensurable ; but both are *men*, and one is a bad man and the other a good man : nothing, however dazzled we may be, can in the long run entitle the one to the honour given by our inward and real judgment ; nothing, not dulness, not mistakes, not failure, can deprive the other of it. No doubt it is true, true too often, that, as it has been said, 'it is the business of the

wise to correct the errors of the good.¹ Nothing can alter that peremptory and persistent 'testimony of the soul,' as to what makes man worthy of his existence,—as to what makes his real greatness and blessedness. Question it, perplex it, tempt it, corrupt it; in the end it recurs to its mysterious and immovable conviction, that the highest law of man is the law of righteousness and purity, that nothing that life can give him can equal the blessing of the Beatitudes. Not merely at death, in sickness and pain, amid loss and disappointment, but always in the depths of our true thoughts comes this answer. Better than to be rich, better than to be clever, better than to be famous and praised, is it, to be like the innermost, most essential, most characteristic excellence of God. He is the All-Wise, indeed, the Almighty, who willed and made the worlds and rejoices in their glory; but, above all, the All-Good, the All-Holy, loving, merciful, patient, just, perfect. And of all His marvellous and lavish gifts to

¹ W. E. Greg, 'Enigmas of Life.'

men, His greatest gift is that by His grace man can become like Him.

‘Why callest thou Me good?’ is the strange word by which our Lord awakens our attention to what we are too ready to think a truism. He, who—amid all that He was *not*, of what men admire in this world,—was the unique and unapproachable example of goodness, speaks to us in it still, amid the absorbing interests of our busy and eager times. It is not merely in the pursuit of wealth or power that men may be unscrupulous, unfaithful to conscience, willing to starve their moral nature. Some of us at any rate can remember how in the desire to know, in the keen zest of enquiry or acquisition, in the pursuit of the accomplishments and refinements of intellect, they have taken liberties with duty, they have given up honesty of work for greater show, they have relaxed their guard on self-deceit, they have put aside or into the background the claims of their religious and moral self-discipline, they have forgotten the supreme end for which

Christians live. Let us never forget that the sacrifice of conscience and of the purpose of goodness for the sake of what we can win for intellect, is only less base than sacrificing it for riches, and is deadly treason against our nature. The great poem of our century,¹ which reflects, as all great poems do, the characteristic thought of its times, holds up the picture of a soul drawn away by extravagant admiration and ambition for the gifts of mind to the most miserable moral ruin. Our safeguard in this dazzling and amazing world of discovery in which we live is loyalty to goodness, loyalty to its supreme claims, loyalty to its Lord. Never let us allow ourselves in the thought, which I fear sometimes comes into men's minds, that being clever and having knowledge makes up for not caring to be good. And let us remember, too, that the pursuit of goodness, the building up character and life in that goodness which our Master meant, is as hard a thing as true intellectual discipline. It is

¹ Goethe, 'Faust.'

"as much a thing of patience and time. It is as much a thing which costs trouble and tries resolution. If goodness were merely the qualities which men are born with, brilliant or lovely, the qualities which each man without trouble and with pleasure exercises—gentleness, love of truth, courage,—goodness would not be a thing which rises by mistakes and falls and painful self-correction to whatever may be its degree of attainment. But if it be the direction of the will to whatever we are sure is right and good, whether congenial or not, whether we like it or no, the student who means to be a master of knowledge may as well take his task easily, as the servant and soldier of the Crucified in following his Master.

We cannot expect that it will be given to every one, when he looks back on his life and his use of it, to feel that he has enriched the world by his thoughts and knowledge; that he has won for it some great discovery; that by the employment of some great and rare gift, he has placed his brethren at a higher level,

and helped them to see more clearly, to feel more adequately, to judge more exactly ; that he has finally dissipated mischievous confusions ; that he has broken a new pathway to unknown truths, and made the road safer and smoother to the old ones. Theirs is indeed a great and enviable lot, to whom it has been given to make this short interval of our mortal life brighter, easier, happier, and who have carried on the work of the elder and unknown benefactors of their race, who gave us the wheat-sheaf and fused the metal, and left us language and number.¹ It is a great thing to have lived like Kepler and Faraday, with such magnificent achievements, with such purity and simplicity of soul, with such enthusiasm for duty and work, and that noble humility which means the deep and wide sense of truth and reality. But there will always be the few and the many, and such privilege cannot be for the many. Yet there is a blessedness, higher than to be

¹ 'Prom. Vincit,' 459-506 ; Newman's 'Sermons,' vol. ii., St. Andrew's Day.

able to bequeath the wealth of Shakespeare and Bacon. We may all of us, by God's unspeakable blessing and help, add to the world's goodness, if we cannot add to its knowledge. We may, one and all of us, the least as well as the highest, do our part in that which is the chief work of God's rule and discipline over us now, the growth and victory of the spirit and mind of Christ. We may all of us have laid our single and perhaps unnoticed stone where the fabric of God's holy kingdom is slowly rising, while He patiently but certainly fulfils His purposes. We may leave, when we go hence, no name and no remembrance. But it rests with every one whether he shall leave what is better than name and remembrance. When He who gave us our life calls for it again, we can leave, as an offering on the altar of the God of our souls, the God of all the worlds, the offering of a life, lived in His light, ruled by His charity, humbly and thankfully resigned when it is time to give it up; a life, rescued by repentance and self-discipline from folly and

sin, from sloth and emptiness ; a life of duty, loyal and industrious, sincere and patient ; a life, in which we sought by His help to draw near to His goodness, to love and to follow it, as its glory is shown to man in the face of Jesus Christ.



SERMON II.

HUMAN LIFE, COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL.

ROM. xii. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

I NEED not remind you how, in the passage of which these words are the opening, the Epistle to the Romans passes from wide views of the universal government of God and the profoundest investigation of His purposes towards mankind, to earnest appeals to the personal conscience, and to the details of individual duty. It is impossible to conceive anything higher, further removed from the sphere of human experience and customary thought, more comprehensive and far-reaching in the compass of its ideas, than that elaborate exposition and commentary on the counsels of the Most High, which fills the first eleven

chapters of the Epistle, and which may be said to be one of the foundations of Christian theology. The moral disorder of all mankind, the tremendous judgment on it and the overwhelming remedy, the new office of faith, the mystery of God's foresight and predestination in His rule over His creatures, the nature and end of their destiny, its accomplishment or its failure, the choice, the rejection of the ancient Church, the unlimited call and boundless prospects of the new, the expansion of a local faith, and the worship of a family into a Church of all the nations and a religion for all mankind,—these, than which no mightier themes ever presented themselves to the minds of speculative thinkers, are unfolded as they are unfolded nowhere else even in Scripture. But then the Epistle, though keeping them always still in view, passes to the familiar scenes and relations of human life, the influences which regulate conduct and elevate homely duties, the wise and high self-rule without which society becomes full of corrup-

tion and tormenting misery. 'Not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;' 'Abhor what is evil, cleave to what is good;' 'Not slothful in business;' 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep;' 'Be of the same mind one towards another;' 'Mind not high things;' 'Bless, and curse not;' 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;' 'For this cause pay ye tribute also;' 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another;' 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak:'—these, and such like, are lessons of very direct and practical application. And they follow awful discourses which disclose what sin is in human nature and in the sight of God; what God has done to restore the world to righteousness: how far back, and how far forward, His purpose goes, and the history of its fulfilment; the Sacrifice of the Everlasting Son, the predestination of the elect and justified, the mystery of the Spirit present with the sons of God, the glory which

shall be revealed in them. One portion of the Epistle follows the other, like the different divisions of a great musical composition, in which an opening, wonderful at once with storm and with light, full of conceptions and passages which strain our thoughts to the utmost and search out the very depths of emotion and sympathy, is succeeded by a movement which relaxes the tension of our minds, transporting us into a new domain of feeling, incorporating and yet giving new significance to familiar melodies, which speak of the trials, the affections, the duties of our common life.

Thus we have, in sequence and contrast, human life in its widest and most mysterious relations, and in its most practical and immediate ones; human life in its most general aspect, in the mass, in the race; and human life in the individual, the unit. Let us devote a few moments to the consideration of this double aspect of human life, which is suggested to us when St. Paul bids each one of us deli-

berately consecrate to God that single separate life which yet is part of an immense whole, which has its roots in an order of things, a kindred and a citizenship, wider than time and space, and which, in its deepest interests, is connected with the fortunes, the hopes, the destinies of that entire race of mankind, which has occupied so wonderfully the care and counsels of God.

Human life, the condition of our existence here, when we think of it in the aggregate, is a distinct and strange object to our minds. Seen in the mass, in the crowd, in nations and races and generations, it loses some of the features and attributes which it has in the individual, and puts on others which are peculiar to itself. The first obvious thing to speak of is its amazing and apparently inexhaustible variety of circumstance and difference. We to whom custom is '*almost as deep as life*,'¹ to whom the time, and the scene, and the society around us are *our world*, are apt to take man

¹ Wordsworth's Ode : '*Intimations of Immortality*.'

and his life as something simple and uniform. *As* certainly as we *are* one in an essential nature, so certain is it that no experience or imagination can reach the infinite developments of our common life. No one can move ever so slightly out of his accustomed sphere, without being surprised, startled, perplexed, perhaps thrown out of his reckoning, by the contradictions which he meets to what he has taken for granted. To what strange and revolting uses is life put, uses necessary it may be, but on which it is wonderful to think that any man should choose to spend his labours, and which yet men do choose and are content with. Then again, look at human life, as you see it on a large scale before our eyes, in a crowd, in the streets, in a great army. Whatever the numbers, it is but a very small fragment of all human life, as it has been from the beginning, as it is at this moment all over the world. But how strange, how overpowering and subduing the thoughts which the sight may awaken. You see a crowd in its united purpose and

, enthusiasm, or in its chance gathering ; and you ask yourself, *where*, when it breaks up, will its component units go to ; what is reserved for each to pass through ; along what various and unexpected ways each, who have just been together in one, will have to walk to reach his own different end. Our imagination gives a unity, even a personality, to organised bodies of men, a regiment, a manufactory, a ship and its crew ; as a whole we think of them, as a whole they do their part, as a whole they perform great things, they triumph, they are defeated and injured. We read of them as if they were the pieces in a game of chess. When we hear of the sacrifice of life in an unwholesome trade, or in the task given to a regiment, or a struggle between two ships, we think of the loss and damage as that done to the instrument as a whole. But that instrument is only a name for a number of separate living wills, and bodies, saved or wrecked. The great Eastern King was moved to tears, remembering that all that vast mul-

titude before him must die: that within a certain number of years, every one to the last must be lying stretched in death, *where*, and *how*, and after what fortune and what suffering, none could forecast. But there is another aspect of this. As face after face, form after form, meets you in the throng, you know, if you think, that every single one has had his own separate, strange history; that every mark and line in his features, tells, if you could know it, of something that has gone before, in all that has made him what at last you see him; that a life, as keen and as continuous as your own, has gone on through who knows what vicissitudes of event or place, till it has come across your own. You read of wars, of battles, of great accidents; of men in the prime of health and power and hope, being cut off in hundreds, in thousands, in ten thousands by manifold kinds of death; lying in the open fields, swept off by the pestilence or the storm, lost in the depths, devoured by the earthquake or the flame.

And you may remember, if you will, that each one of those poor bodies was the result and achievement of what we call nature's patient care and skill: that each had been a babe, a little child, perhaps hoped for and welcomed as God's blessing and gift, probably watched over and nursed with tenderest love; a child which had played and delighted in its young years, had gradually and slowly gathered the strength and capacities of manhood, till in a moment all was snapped and broken, all the choice workmanship spoiled, the toil and waiting wasted and thrown away, by the chance stroke which suddenly brought death. Even in the miserable criminal about to mount the scaffold, it gives us a pang to think that he has come to this ghastly and hopeless hour, from having been once a little smiling child. The wreck and ruin of the battlefield has not this dreariness; it has at least duty and self-devotion to ennoble it; but it is not the less the wreck, the sad and pitiful wreck, of that which it had taken years to form; of experience

training, faculty, ripened and perfected, then in a moment brought to nothing as if it had never been.

But besides looking at human life in the fortunes of its multitudinous separate units, we can look at it in its broad general aspects. We can look at it as a great system of natural phenomena. We can look at it as a great order, in which all is appointed, directed, controlled by the providence of the Almighty and the All-Wise. We can look at it as a great perpetual development of powers and elements, a vast and most complex organisation, in which individuals, one or many alike, are as much merged and lost, as the vegetable cells which build up the oak tree, or as the insects which form the coral reefs in the ocean. It is so looked at by philosophies. It is made the subject of generalisations and theories. Broad conclusions of experience about it are embodied in maxims, proverbs, phrases, rules, fables, stories, made we know not by whom, spread over all times, and over all the

earth. As the generations go on, producing in greater abundance and variety the incidents of human life, and exhibiting them more clearly, later observers, later speculators become dissatisfied with the earlier and perhaps ruder and coarser attempts, to describe, co-ordinate, account for them. Its moral and intellectual facts are treated in the same impersonal and general method as its physical and material ones. Students investigate its tendencies and governing forces: they attempt to ascertain and lay down its necessary laws; they seek to bring its chances, its passions, its wild outbreaks, its fantastic fashions, its basenesses and its heroisms, under the yoke of averages. Others, in turn, sensible of the probability and risk of looseness and inaccuracy, lay the foundation for surer knowledge in closer and wider study. Mankind and human life rise before them, not as seen in cities, the homes and products of the last civilisation, not as seen in Christendom and its fringes, not as seen in the times of classical culture or as affected by the teaching of the

chosen people, but as traceable in the dimmest antiquity, as shown in what to us are the monstrous varieties of the wildest and remotest barbarism, as unfolded under the influence of mighty religions and enduring beliefs, like those of India, China, Egypt, Assyria, Arabia. They accumulate its facts from the widest surveys; they arrange and exhibit them in methodised form: they tabulate them with the driest and most minute exactness—physical peculiarities and moral laws, appetites, emotions, passions, instincts, social ties, family customs, sanctions of duty, arts, habits, superstitions, government.¹ Man, that familiar, well-known being, breaks up into classes and sub-orders and varieties, almost as numerous and as strongly contrasted as the tribes, wild and tame, of the brute world. How easily in this view we can dispense with the greatest men. You may write of man and his ways, with the curious precision of observation with which Huber and Lubbock write of the ways of bees and ants. And who can

¹ Herbert Spencer's 'Sociological' Tables.

moulded and shaped us. We live in the midst of collective human life, in nations, in churches, in families, in societies : and collective human life is something more than the aggregate of separate lives. Bodies of men, nations, churches, races, families have their definite character, their ways of thinking, their peculiarities of sentiment or passion. The facts, the powers, the characteristics, the attributes of collective human life are as certain as those of personal life ; but they are not the same : they often differ widely. What *can* be done, and *cannot* be done, is very different, in the case of individuals and bodies ; their tempers, their sense of interest, their self-control, their ideas of honour, are all framed on different scales. Bodies will act without scruple as perhaps no single one of their members would act. Men in crowds will be brutal, who singly are reasonable and kindly. In disputes, in the reform of abuses, what could easily be settled between you and me as individuals, cannot be set right, cannot be mended, between societies and parties ; concessions and admissions cannot

be made, generosity cannot have its course, because of impalpable yet decisive forces, controlling or hindering public action, though not private. And this mighty collective existence, ever continuous, ever active, is one of the forms and sides of human life. Social life presses us individuals round about, as we say, like an atmosphere, most intimate with us, most indispensable, most irresistible ; an atmosphere the weight of which we do not feel, but without which we could not live ; an atmosphere of social arrangements, of settled institutions and dominant customs, of laws written and unwritten, of principles and sanctions greater than laws, which no single man made or invented, which no single man's will and hand, but the joint will of the whole insists upon and executes : an atmosphere of ideas, tastes, antipathies, suppositions, beliefs, good and bad, reasonable or groundless : public traditions, public sins and laxity, public apathy or enthusiasm, public wisdom and courage or public folly, public light and public darkness. There it is, and yet so baffling to localise or

define. We talk of the world being wiser than its wisest man. We talk of some great revolution of ideas, of some new mode of thinking, of sympathy for some cause, of some great delusion, 'being in the air,'—hardly to be traced to individuals, and little to be controlled by them. In this public and collective life which encompasses us, individuals are in many respects perfectly powerless and helpless: in others they can resist it, but as a swimmer fights with the waves and current: in any case, it is of great power to affect us. It affects us, it affects the course of events, sometimes beyond what is reason, and in defiance of it. It makes what is perfectly inconceivable and out of the question, one year, perfectly natural and commonplace the next. There are times, as we know, when it is impossible to get a hearing for a cause, an opinion, a course of action. It is not a matter of argument—there is a 'general attitude and habit of mind, which rules opinion. Then public sentiment and governing principles change; the major premisses which are uppermost, most in

sight, most strongly supported, alter : and things are done, good or bad, wise or unwise, which could not be thought of a short time before, perhaps which will not be possible or conceivable a short time after. This is what, on its bad side, Scripture calls 'the world.' But it is also part of that order by which God directs and guides mankind : it is He who 'determines,' not only the bounds of their habitation, but 'the times before appointed' for great movements and changes ; who, for individuals and for generations, prepares and fixes the 'fulness' and ripeness 'of time,' whose counsel and hand ordain, and bring about, and remove, the opportunities, and the barriers which cannot be overstepped, of human life. It is as with the training of the chosen people—from the Law to Prophecy, from Prophecy to the Gospel : so only in due season, one by one, the veils are removed from truth, and time clears up perplexities, and opens the doors of knowledge. There is no forcing or hurrying God's order ; it determines the place of generations, *and so*, of individuals, who must share

what is of their generation. The discoveries of one age become the commonplaces of another. There was a time when it was new to plough the ground, to forge metals, to use the force of steam. So in the arts of life, and the distinctions of philosophy. The most original builder of the eleventh century could not have conceived the churches of the fourteenth; the meanest painter of later times is master of the craft, of the good sense of his art, beyond the greatest of his predecessors; the ordinary critic of this day is familiar with rules and principles of writing which were the discoveries of the masters of the early times. Who can believe that any of us would be exactly what he is, if he had lived a hundred years earlier, or a hundred years later? if he had lived in a different society and had spoken a different tongue? Who could have understood the language and ideas of modern science in the days of Moses, of Homer, even of Socrates? It could not be: the time was not come. Who, knowing only the methods of rule under Indian or

Persian despotisms, could conceive the independence and freedom of Western civil life? What an interval from the common idea of usury in the time of Bacon, to the clearer thoughts which have made the use of money innocent and universal? We find it hard to understand our fathers—their speculations and their customs, their eagerness about disputes to us inconceivable, the moral standards accepted among good men, their unquestioned practical systems—slavery, persecution, the horrors of the criminal law:—and doubtless our children will think us in many ways strangely blind. All men must be, in half of what they are, *of their time, of their society*. God, who has appointed all, great and small, to be born *now*, and not then, *here*, and not there, has made it part of the condition of their being.

2. That is one great side and aspect of human life: human life in the mass, in its limitless extension, in its inconceivable universality. But besides all this, out of the 'infinite

multitude of creatures,¹ alongside of the mighty phenomena of nature, dwarfed by them and yet strangely above them, there emerges the individual soul, the individual life, single, separate, solitary. It is as real as the vast mass of life which we call mankind: its interests are not less great: its course, its fortunes, are not less eventful. Lost to our eye in the vast 'sea of being,' there it is nevertheless, waking or sleeping, hour by hour and day by day, beginning, following on, the stages, the trials of an existence which is to be endless. Through all the complications and the confusions of outward life, through its revolutions, its shows, its disasters, that one single thread goes on unrolling itself, that one point goes on tracing its unbroken line. That single soul is, in one sense, alone in all the crowd, alone in the world, alone with Him who made it: joined as it may be most closely with others, it has its incommunicable thoughts, its joys, its fears, its regrets, its shame, which none can know or share;—its history,

¹ τίς γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν ἀμετρήτῳ κτίσει. —Ecclus. xvi. 17.

which may touch, but cannot be confounded with another's:—alone for great part of life, alone in its passing from us, alone in what is to become of it. In the secret hours when it recollects and realises itself, there seem to 'be but two' beings in the whole universe, itself and God.'¹ It can separate itself from all things about it, as if they were not. Be the throng ever so great and so mighty, each man in it—to use the words of a great writer, who has made this pulpit for ever famous—'Every being in the vast concourse is his own centre, and all things about him are but shades. . . . He is everything to himself, and no one else is really anything. No one outside of him can really touch him, can touch his soul, his immortality: he must live with himself for ever. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence: and the scene in which he bears part for the moment, is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface.'²

¹ Newman's 'Sermons,' vol. i. p. 23.

² *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 95.

And here it is, that we are our own selves—that we are our own, to do what we will with ; that we are masters over a special grant to us of time and of power. Much of human life is absolutely out of our hands. But our own life, bounded and limited as it must be, is, within those bounds and limits, in our own charge and at our own disposal, in a way which nothing else in the world is. This is what we have direct from God, our Maker, our Master, our Father. He, indeed, watches over us and guides us—‘Our times are in His hand :’ but here, we have to choose, to act for ourselves, as none can choose or act for us, as none can force us to choose or act. This is what we may use or waste ; employ wisely or madly, to good purpose or to bad. This is where we are tried. Human life, as a great whole, is very wonderful to look at in its vastness and complexity ; we may contemplate it from the outside, as a spectacle, as a growth, as a machine, in which individuals are swallowed up in countless numbers, in which even the greatest men count but

for little, and are not long missed. But it is, besides, a scene of innumerable separate responsibilities, each of them as real, as grave, as stringent, as if there were no others. The spectator of it suddenly finds that what he watches and judges, has recoiled on himself; that he himself is called on to give an account, that he himself is on his trial, that he himself is the object of judgment. The mightiest is not excused: the most obscure cannot escape. In the midst of the world's changes, the 'world's debate,' each has his separate life to live. And this is what St. Paul, after dwelling on the amazing history and destiny of the race as a whole, bids each one of us for himself consecrate as his offering to God.

This is the double aspect of the scene of human existence; so wide and abstract, yet to each of us so narrow and personal, at once so remote, and touching us so closely. All must have their practical thoughts about their relations to it. Here we are—what do we think of it? what are we doing in it? We have

a life: what use can we make of it? It is a pertinent question at all times—much more on the first Sunday of a new Term of work, to some here a day on which they take a new departure for the voyage of life.

I say nothing of gross, stupid waste of it. I say nothing of professed selfishness, of the vileness, the baseness, the horrible cruelty of vicious pleasure and profligate indulgence. But there are many alluring and fascinating ways of using it, which do not come under the condemnation of gross misuse, but which are not those for which we can believe that God meant it. We may escape the charge of insolent worldliness, and yet use it only in refined, hard-hearted isolation. For solitary as each soul is, in will, in its inmost secret self, untouched by another life, distinct from all creation, it yet has ties and relations to things and persons round it, which are as necessary and inevitable as its own being; and the law of duty to what is outside of it is one of its own most binding laws. But we *may* elect to live, *as*

„ *lookers on.* Every one knows what there will be to reward, to absorb us. The history of man, as it is known, is enough to occupy our keenest and strongest powers ; and no one can doubt how much more there is to be known, which is as yet beyond our reach. Or in the study of nature and its laws, in its calm and certain order more imperially majestic than anything human can be, we may find no place for other interests ; or in human character and human aspirations, unfolded in art, in language, in poetry, in the creations of the drama or the novelist, in the varied play of social life, we may find endless material for thought and enjoyment. We may throw our whole life into these channels. We may give ourselves wholly to these things ; no one will blame us. But, when we think what human life really is—what men need of one another, what they can do for one another ; what has been, what may be done by human insight and human courage—what will never be done, if there is not heart and brain, goodness and wisdom

and sympathy, to do it ;—what mischiefs still haunt the world, to which our eyes are yet hardly open ;—what tragedies lie hid beneath the most brilliant society ; what miserable and hopeless masses of life are covered by the roofs of a great city ; how in dumb and silent anguish hearts are looking out every morning for good that never comes, and arms are stretched in vain for help that no one knows how to give ; how in the highest public prosperity, doubt and suffering, barbarism, untamable and unconquered, never cease to cross its path and affront its pride ; how the brightest life, the keenest intellectual power, is at the mercy of the irreparable stroke—the catastrophe, the bereavement, the life-long madness or palsy, the pang that cannot be charmed ;—it is strange to be content to be spectators only. As long as the world's evils last ;—while there are diseases which cannot be cured, and sorrows which cannot be comforted ;—as long as the poet's words are true, that ' our sincerest laughter is fraught with pain, and our sweetest songs

are those that tell of saddest thought ;¹— as long as, in the moralist's sad confession, 'there are chastisements which do not chasten, trials that do not purify, and sorrows that do not elevate ; pains and privations that harden the tender heart without softening the stubborn will ; light that leads astray, and virtues that dig their own grave ;'²— as long as the sin reigns in the world, and death is so cruel ;—as long as

' Pain doth bind
Men's souls in closer links of lovingness
Than death itself can sever ;'³—

as long as this is so, we must feel that merely to be lookers on, observers, judges, however blameless, however compassionate, cannot be all that life was meant for.

And do not say that to be active is enough. Do not be content to say that the student is, as indeed he is, a worker : that so that we are employed diligently, profitably, as parts of the great system of human life,

¹ Shelley.

² W. E. Greg, ' *Enigmas of Life*, ' p. 209.

³ ' *Epic of Hades* ' (first ed.), p. 156.

no more need be thought of. For we are parts of a whole, and we are also *ourselves*: inextricably locked with the train and machinery of human fellowship, but also tracing up our single thread of being—as it ‘comes from the great deep and goes to the great deep’—to the Awful Will which appointed each soul to live. And it is easy to be busy and lost in the whirl and heat of affairs, and to forget ourselves; to belong to every one and to everything but ourselves. There is no more pathetic sight, than to see a great mind, a great soul, in the strong exercise of its powers and greatness, doing good to mankind, advancing the cause of knowledge, of justice, of humanity, and yet itself negligent of its own moral health; pressing, honestly pressing on others the lessons it will not learn; profitable to the general order of the world, mischievous, fatal to itself. It is false religion to say that your own soul needs your exclusive care; it is still more false to say that amid the activities and industries of life, it needs none. Depend upon it, the outward

disclosure of noble character, the great unexpected deed, resolved on, done, as it were by a momentary flash of heroic force,—the young physician giving up life and youth and hope to tend the doomed plague ship,—bishop and sailor dying willingly by the hands of the poor savages they went to save—these things come not without preparation. The sacrifice, the energy which for the moment seems to exclude all thought besides its own, tells of long solitary and underground work of the soul with itself, conscious of its call, and obedient to it ;—tells of long and serious converse in secret with high thoughts and resolutions, and with Him who gives and inspires them.

What shall we do with our life—amid the needs of the world around us, amid the calls of God—we who *are*, and are *not*, our own—our own, for nothing can equal the single solitariness of our separate spirit ; *not* our own—‘for ye are bought with a price,’ and in ‘body and spirit ye are God’s.’ ‘I beseech you,’ says that wonderful teacher of the nations, whose survey

of humanity was as vast and comprehensive as his interest in individual lives was ready and deep—‘I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice to God, living, holy, well-pleasing to Him.’ It is the counsel of the wisest thought, as well as of the most devout faith. It is not the work which each man does—student, teacher, enquirer, man of business, artist—which makes the difference between man and man; it is not the work, but the *consecration* of the work; the moral colour thrown over it by a life which has an account to give, which owns the bond, not merely of external attraction, but of inward duty,—which pleases itself in its work—why should it not?—but does something more than please itself,—which feels at every step that it must at last be judged. We have, indeed, to look outside of ourselves. ‘Look not,’ says St. Paul, ‘every man on his own things, but also on the things of others.’ Each of our souls, single and detached, as it is in itself, is also bound by innumerable bonds to the general

system of human interests. And now, if ever, when the field of enterprise and co-operation for the general good is widening so marvellously, 'we want,' as the seventeenth century writer cried out,¹—'we want *public souls*, we want them ;'—souls that are not afraid in the public cause of an unsuccessful career, and are content with failure, as soldiers are content to die or be maimed for life in the public cause.—But when our public service is done, then comes the time to meet ourselves alone. We have to meet ourselves in our weakness, in our ignorance, in our sin, in the awfulness and mystery of our separate existence. We hear voices speaking to us as if our personal fate were the one object of interest of the Infinite Compassion and the Eternal Love—'Who loved me, and gave Himself for me'—'The Body which was given for *thee*—the Blood which was shed for *thee*—remember that Christ died for *thee*.' Let us not, for any outward interest, tempted

¹ Bishop Hackett, quoted in Coleridge, 'Aids to Reflection' (1836), p. 143.

by the fascination of the widest thoughts and most absorbing aims, shrink from that contact with the inward discipline of our souls. Think as largely and as nobly as you can: follow with all your powers—for this you all can do—not as idlers and dreamers, but as fellow-labourers with the providence of God, whatever work your hand has found to do. But remember *yourselves*. Remember how the Apostle winds up the greatest picture of human life and destinies ever set before the minds of men. 'We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having, *then*, gifts differing according to the grace given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.' And then follow all the details of those homely virtues, so easy to talk of and admire,

so hard to exercise—love without dissimulation, abhorrence of evil, cleaving to good, kindly affection, brotherly love, honour and deference paid by one to another ; industry, fervour, service to God ; joy, hope, patience, unwearied prayer ; generosity to the needy and stranger, generosity and forgiveness to the insolent and the cruel ; sympathy, concord, lowliness, modesty. May the Great Master help us all to find our true place in His world, and the true use of our life. May He ‘in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom’ —‘*quem nosse vivere, cui servire regnare est*’¹—teach us the rules and laws of that eternal service, which is now beginning on the scene of time. ‘None of us liveth to himself, and none of us dieth to himself ; living or dying, we belong to Him, who is Lord both of dead and living.’ That is the *fact*, which it is not ours to alter. May we make it ours in *will*, that ‘whether living or dying, we may be the Lord’s.’

¹ Original form in ‘*Sarum Office and Sacramentary of Gelasius*’ (i. 727).

SERMON III.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR BELIEF.

ST. MATT. VI. 22.

*The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single,
thy whole body shall be full of light.*

THERE will be no greater anxiety on our deathbeds, than as to how we have behaved towards light and truth, towards that which came to us with the signs and the claims of truth. I need not remind you how earnestly and how repeatedly this subject is dwelt upon in the teaching of our Lord. The memorable caution which meets us in the outset in the Sermon on the Mount, recurs in varied forms. His great saying is preserved in almost identical words, though in different contexts, in two of the Gospels. 'The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye

be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.' Or, as St. Luke has it, 'Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.'¹ The same warning is contained in the constantly-repeated charge, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;' 'Take heed what ye hear;' 'Take heed how ye hear.'² The same lesson is enforced in the manifold references to the words of Isaiah³ in our Lord's comment on His own parable of the Sower, as given by St. Matthew. Again and again He returns to the prophet's bold phrase, about the 'eyes that seeing, see not,' and 'the ears that hearing, hear not;' that 'seeing do not perceive,' and 'hearing do not understand.' The words on which their Master had laid such stress dwelt in the minds of St. John and St. Paul, to be repeated by them, to shape their thoughts also.⁴ St. John's Gospel, which shows us what

¹ Luke xi. 35.

² Mark iv. 24; Luke viii. 18.

³ Is. vi. 9; Matt. xiii. 13-18.

⁴ John xii. 40; Acts xxviii. 26, 27; Rom. xi. 8.

happened when the Light of the world and of all men was in the world, among the souls for whom His light was meant, is, as you know, full of passages which speak of men's behaviour in the presence and under the responsibilities of light and truth. 'This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.' 'In judgment,' says our Lord on another occasion, 'I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'¹

On this subject, then, or rather on one particular aspect of this subject, I will venture to say a few words. Our responsibility for the light given us includes two things, distinct in themselves, though closely connected ; viz. our responsibility for living and acting according to that light ; and our responsibility for having and seeing the light itself. That is, our responsibility for acting consistently with our belief and opinions, and our responsibility for our belief and

¹ John iii. 19 ; ix. 39.

opinions, for their formation and hold upon our minds. The two run into one another. But I wish at present to keep in view, mainly, the latter.

I can hardly imagine any thinking man, who holds himself responsible for anything, seriously accepting the shallow phrase, which sometimes meets us, that we are not responsible for what we think and believe and hold : as if, supposing a man to think at all, he cannot help what his thinking leads him to believe : as if our thoughts and our belief were the mechanical, necessary, blind result of certain argumentative processes, which once set going produce their inevitable conclusions, as the printing machine gives off the impressions of the types with which it is charged. The living mind does not so act. No one, I think, who honestly reviews his own history, and examines into the foundation of his own principles of life, can doubt that he has had, at least, a great deal to do with setting up the types. The way and direction we choose to look makes a great difference in what we see and what we do not see. We may be attentive

or inattentive to what passes before us as it passes before others : we may welcome thoughts or escape from them ; impressions which we cannot help receiving we may cherish and deepen, or we may leave to be effaced : we may live in an atmosphere where one class of ideas, one class of assumptions and maxims, are perpetually at hand, or are perpetually away : the books we read, the trains of thought we follow, the authorities which we habitually defer to, with all their subtle, insensible, undefinable hold on us, are very much matters of our choice. If we think in one way rather than another, we have most of us done a good deal to put ourselves in the way of so thinking. If arguments come home to us with irresistible force, we have had ourselves something to do with preparing our souls, preparing the whole man, mind and heart and conscience, to be alive to their cogency. True, there are the bands and fashioning mould of circumstances, the discipline of education, the influences, sweet or sad, anyhow deep, of home ways and of a mother's code of right

and wrong. I quite recognise the overmastering force of facts and reason, often against the most adverse powers, often with most unexpected triumph over the dead weight of custom and prejudice, the living antagonism of passion and interest. I do not forget how in the presence of some great idea which takes possession of a time or a people, all individual intellect is dwarfed and bows down, and is carried away by an overpowering impulse which at the moment it cannot fathom, and which at once animates, exalts, and controls it. Yet, on the whole, the government of our own minds is in our own hands. That great instrument of reason given to us, we can play on it much as we will, well or ill, wisely or foolishly: and the result is the complex fabric of habitual thought, opinion, conviction, faith, on which we have to live. Who can reasonably say that for this we are not responsible?

It is then a matter of supreme importance, *how* we hear, *how* we think, how we reach our conclusions and build up our beliefs. Important

on all subjects, it is most important in religion. Important always and everywhere, it is eminently important at a time of ever-widening religious enquiry, and in a place like this, where the reason of men being gathered together is that, with more leisure than elsewhere, and more help from one another, they may learn the true and wise use of their endowments and capacities for knowing and communicating truth. For indeed we cannot remind ourselves too often or too seriously that the questions which are so freely discussed among us now, and are forced upon us all with increasing reach of aim and urgency of argument, are questions of life and death to human hope—not in one particular form and under one set of conditions only, but in any form intelligible to our minds, to any hope that we know of. A time so critical, so stormy in the regions of thought and feeling, and so pregnant with consequences which are scarcely conceivable to us now, is a time to be watchful over both life and intellect, watchful over the way

in which we handle the grave matters which we may be called on to handle, and over the way in which we prepare ourselves to handle them. It is possible that, as men at all times are apt to do, we may exaggerate the real force and meaning of what interests us and goes on before us,—as it is also possible that we may undervalue it. But a man must be indeed engrossed by the present, who does not sometimes see in the future possibilities impending over his children which he does not like to think of.

In a time of strongly-conflicting ideas and aims—and I suppose that our own is such a time—there are obvious and special dangers, very subtle but very formidable, to wise and faithful thinking, from the mere fact of the world being roughly divided at such a time into two great camps, of the old and the new. Whatever line a man takes, whether he attacks or defends, whether he accepts what is received and ancient and common, or is dissatisfied with it, and devotes himself to criticism, to discovery, to the reconstruction or overthrow of what he finds

established, or the substitution of something better in its place, in either case he is exposed to temptations, moral temptations, quite independent of the goodness or badness of his cause, but greatly affecting the habits of his mind, the course of his thoughts, the character of his judgments. The history of every great discussion, of every great revolution, of every great reform, proves this. I do not doubt that the history of the greatest of all revolutions, that Divine Reform of all things which came with the Gospel, would, if we knew its earlier portion better, exhibit and prove it also. I have no doubt that, not on one side only but on both, we should find below the great public cause, personal feelings, private motives, individual differences of character, helping to determine men's choice of their position. There are dangers special to those who hold fast received beliefs and opinions : there are dangers special to those who aim at change ; and this whether it is a question of change in religion or philosophy, of a Reform Bill or a Budget,

of a new trade or a new mechanical invention. The mere fear and dislike of change, the aversion to possibly indefinite trouble, the natural slowness of most of us to imagine that things can be different from what we have been accustomed to, the dread of the unknown, the difficulty of adjusting new ideas to old ones, the value for what we actually have, the impatience of doubt, of perplexity, of importunate questioning, where *we* can see no need for them,—all these are strong forces on the side of what is old, whatever it may be. But not less strong on the side of novelty and attack is the mere enthusiasm of change, the sympathy with enterprise, the spur to the imagination of the possibilities of hitherto unthought-of improvement, the dislike and contempt of what is old-fashioned and commonplace and safe, the impatience, in eager and sanguine natures, of that which keeps others back, the scorn of pretexts and apologies, the pleasure of the difficulty and the strife, the ‘*gaudia certaminis*,’ the end forgotten in the

joys of battle ; the keen satisfaction of feeling oneself original, and bold, and adventurous, nay even, of surprising and startling others by our strong and fearless words. No man, I suppose, has ever gone through days of controversy without observing, in himself and in others, the presence and the mischief of a bias quite outside the subjects of dispute ; and every man who cares for the interests of truth will wish, though it may be in vain, that his own experience might help others to be on their guard against these subtle and constant forces, which in every controversy of whatever nature, religious, political, scientific, give a certain drift to men's minds, like the unfelt currents of the sea, which sweep the ship stealthily and un-awares out of the course that it meant to steer.

So much may be said of most questions which divide men. But there are deeper and graver dangers, besetting those religious problems which have come to the front in our days, and which some of us are called to think out.

No one can speak of these dangers without remembering, that perhaps he himself is an instance of the very faults which he condemns. What he sees all round him, what he sees in those from whom he differs, he may suspect in himself and his own side. But not the least effective sermons are those which a man preaches, if not against himself, yet with the full consciousness of his own temptations and mistakes. And no one, I think, can be desirous to be true to truth, can value that 'freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom' which ought, according to a great authority,¹ to be the aim and fruit of all our education, without having disquieting thoughts as to the way in which the highest subjects of human interest are sometimes dealt with.

To take one point. A great conflict is going on between Christianity and ideas and beliefs which would destroy or supplant it. We look on, we cannot help it, for the world is full of it; we follow with interest the turns of the

¹ Dr. Newman.

battle ; we pass judgment on the skill of the combatants. It is conducted with ability, often with courtesy, with feeling, with conviction and purpose. We remark on the improved character of the discussion ; the times at least of Voltaire, we observe, with satisfaction, are past. The old spectacle of unmannerly impertinence to such a thing as Christianity, though it has not wholly disappeared, is generally condemned, as unbecoming and out of place. But with all the literary power, and all the real and often pathetic earnestness shown in it, there is wanting often, as it seems to me, an adequate sense of the full issues raised by it, and of what in fact depends on it. I do not think, at any rate, that the majority of those who follow this tremendous debate reflect, or in any degree realise, what is involved in victory or defeat. It is not victory or defeat for a mere philosophical theory or criticism. It is not a question of something future and at a distance, something to be developed in time, something which raises the possibility of a future policy, which

retards or brings near a future change in institutions. It is a present, instant result. If the opponents of Christianity are right, if the victory lies with them, it is much more than that Christians are mistaken, as men have been mistaken, and have corrected in time their mistakes, about science, about principles of government, about the policy or the economy of a state. It means that now as regards religion, as widely as men are living and acting, all that is now, is false, rotten, wrong. Our present hopes are utterly extinguished. Our present motives are as unsubstantial as bubbles on water. We are living in a dream. We are wasting on an idol the best love, the highest affections, the purest tenderness which can dwell in human hearts.

This is no matter to trifle about or to play with. These speculations, if we must enter on them, which pass above the heads of tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures who know nothing of what so deeply concerns their fate, are at least not to be ventured on,

according to the saying now become proverbial, 'with a light heart.' No doubt, we cannot at every moment keep before our minds their full gravity. Doubtless, men must eat and drink in the midst of civil war and revolution, and they follow their business or amusement even under a Reign of Terror. But it is indeed a grave thing for any thinking man, if over the whole moral world—and surely, I am not exaggerating even in the judgment of those who cannot accept Christianity—a shadow has fallen which was not there before ; if in the firmament of heaven the sun has gone out for ever without hope of return, if it is to be agreed that for the facts of sin, of unhappiness, of pain, of death, there is no longer any remedy but what nature—and we know what that is by the experience of centuries—can give us ; if the Saviour of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, has not appeared, if the Comforter has not come, if Christ has no Church on earth. It is a thing to make us look aghast at conclusions which, if true, are the most terrible announcement ever

made to man, the ruin of all that millions have lived for, the most frightful proclamation of the victory for ages and ages, in the good, the wise, the pure, the suffering, of the most deadly, the most dreadful of cheats. For we, not like the heathen before us, know what we have believed. We have believed deliberately. We knew what we had. We know what we lose.

If this *is* so, there is no help for it. No wishing can give us that which is not, and we cannot have what in the nature of things cannot be, by admiring it, by imagining it. One thing is certain; nothing can take the place of Christianity. Its destroyers have nothing to offer us to replace it, for surely it is idle to speak of substitutes, which mock our common sense; and they can but tell us to be patient and bravely resigned, and to live soberly and reasonably as we may for the present, making the best we can of the reign of sin, and pain, and death. But if there is nothing to give, it is not their fault that they cannot give it us. Only do not let us deceive ourselves. Do not

let us think it a light matter, a phase or even a crisis of philosophical development or literary history. If we must lose Christianity, let us be alive to what we are doing, and face with open eyes the consequences. Consequences, we all know, are nothing to the logic of an argument. Consequences cannot alter the laws and facts of the universe. But consequences bring home to us a quicker sense of the reality of what we are talking about. They are a bridle on idle and empty words. They lift a question out of the region of speculative interest and discussion: they make us understand that we are dealing with *things* and not *words* only, and that for such dealing we want the contact and grasp which their practice gives to men who have to act,—the statesman, the physician, the soldier, the judge, the engineer, the artist. If we must give up Christianity, let us at least insist on knowing what it is, and what it rests upon, and how it has fulfilled its pretensions; on knowing these things as they *are in themselves*, not from clever representations which happen

for the moment to command the popular ear. Do not let us be content with loose thinking and assuming that its enemies have probably made out their case. For I venture to say that Christianity, if not true, is the most extraordinary thing in the world ; really much more extraordinary than if it *is* true. I repeat, this world of our experience is ten times more strange and puzzling than it is now, if Christianity is not true. And if we are to lose it—to lose Him whom the modern world has hitherto looked to for its ideal and leaned on for its support, if, the new world before us is to be one without the Cross, or God, or immortality, let us know what we are about ; let us have the seriousness which befits the surrender of such a hope, the seriousness with which a vanquished state surrenders territory or independence to the necessities of defeat, with which in the old strife of parties a beaten statesman surrendered his life and fate to the law.

There are men, I know, who have done this ; who have accepted the tremendous alternative

as a sacrifice to conviction, and parted from their old belief with seriousness and with pain. But what is to be said of the indifference, or the indolence, or the levity, which refuses to appreciate the greatness of the question? What is to be said of those who on such a subject amuse themselves with going over conflicting arguments, and criticising the originality and attractiveness of brilliant theories; who can endure to look on it as a mere intellectual exercise, as they would follow a game of chess or the unwinding of the plot of a story; who do not think it worth 'their while to ask themselves in earnest, *what* mankind must lose in Christianity, and *why* mankind must lose it; who are content, because the difficulties of religion, like the difficulties of every other view of the world, are very great, and can be stated with force and impressiveness, to acquiesce in a careless unconcern as to what they should think of it? What is to be said of the cold-heartedness which, without being committed to a decision against religion, enjoys those indirect

measures of attack, which only *they* have a right to use who have finally taken their side ; relishes the caricature and the scoff ; has patience and smiles for the process, when people talk of

‘ Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ’ ?

Any creed which has commanded the reverence and devotion of men, be it that of Mahomet or Buddha, deserves a more respectful death-blow and a more honoured fall. But that without a pang, without caring or interest, men should intrepidly see the Creed of Creeds passing from among men in so ignoble a fashion, this is wonderful. The reason of this intrepidity is, no doubt often, that from sluggishness or poverty of imagination, men do not in their secret hearts believe in the danger. But such insensibility and such negligence is as high a crime against truth as bigotry and prejudice. It is a negligence, a stupid unconcern, which provoked the fierce wrath and scorn of the Italian poet for those who were neither for God nor for His enemies, but only for themselves ;

which kindled Pascal's burning words, and stung into sarcasm the calm and self-controlled mind of Butler. It is risking the loss altogether of the power of judging. It is turning the light of the eye into darkness.

I will take another point. It is said, and rightly said, that we must follow truth wherever it leads us. Any one who believes in truth at all must say it. But I think that following truth is sometimes confounded with yielding to the immediate pressure of an argument—which is a very different thing. For I am sure it cannot be too much remembered, what the history of every controversy shows,—and every controversy and argument has a most curious history, full of strange turns and eventful surprises,—that the force and pressure of argument at any particular time has much in it of what we call accident. For argument, and what so often stands in place of argument, the force of a skilful statement, an impressive representation, a broad and consistent theory, depends very much for its effect on the ability

of those who use it and make it popular ; and this ability is on one side to-day, on the other to-morrow.' We need but look into the debates of our courts of law and of our newspapers to see that the immediate apparent force of an argument or set of arguments is *by itself* no measure of what it may be ultimately worth. If all to which the answer did not at once present itself, claimed at once our assent, we should indeed be in perplexity. Further, though argument is the natural means of getting at the verdict of reason, it is only a means and step, part of a process more complex and subtle than itself. For reason is wide, and manifold, and waits its time ; and argument is partial, one-sided, and often *then* most effective, when least embarrassed by seeing too much : and one link left out, one fact overlooked, one step missed, may vitiate the most triumphant argument, as one element forgotten vitiates the whole of a long and intricate calculation. The victory of argument may sway backwards and forwards, like the fortune of single battles ; and important as

each battle may be, the loss or gain of a battle does not always decide the upshot of a campaign, or the advantages of a campaign the result of a great struggle between nations. Again, the weight of an argument, like the significance of an event, is itself determined by many things without it.¹ It will appear very different to the old and the young ; to the happy, and to the miserable :—very different to the same mind in the intoxication of success and popularity, or in the depression of failure and rebuke ; in the whirl of society and the sunshine of an easy life, or by the bed of sickness, of hopelessness, of death ; *before* and *after* foreign travel, with its enlargement or its dissipation of mind ; in the free air of the mountains and the sea, or within the bounds of a quiet and narrow study. Its force varies, I suppose the experience of most of us has taught us, as a man is surrounded by those who take for granted one set of assumptions and conclusions, or by those who oppose them or are indifferent. We are

¹ See Newman, 'Univ. Sermon', xii. p. 268.

affected by the atmosphere of thought we are in. One set of ideas shuts out or obscures another. Imagination plays a great part in the life of our intellect, and it prepares a ground for argument to work on. Doubtless it is true, as is sometimes said, that in our familiarity with the thoughts and books of theology, our conceptions of external nature, its immensity, its certainties, its wonders, may become narrow and feeble ; but it is also true, as many I think have felt, that from the long-continued contemplation of nature and its wide-reaching, unbroken laws, and from their power over the imagination, the moral side of things has sometimes grown pale and tame, the fascination of the grand spectacle has dazzled us and dulled our sense of the things of the Spirit, and our old thoughts of prayer and sin and even home have seemed strange and unreal. Or again, we see things simply in the historical plane, and events, characters, actions, come before us as mere facts—as phenomena, all of equal worth and importance, of the strange world we live in. There

is much to learn from such wide comparisons and comprehensive generalisations. But they sometimes tempt us to forget that in this world's scene we cannot be only spectators—we must be actors too; that there is no point from which we can survey it outside the scene itself. We cannot contemplate our world and its history from the sun. We cannot get away from the conditions under which we live. We can only try to allow for them.

A great writer of antiquity¹ has told us how people come to be haters of reason as they come to be haters of men: they make mistakes in dealing with each; they trust unwisely, and when their unreasonable expectations are disappointed, they turn on each with resentment and despair equally unreasonable. I suppose that we have not outgrown the danger. We are living under strong intellectual excitement. If enquiry and speculation have before now been as adventurous and searching, discovery, in many spheres of knowledge, has never been so brilliant, so

¹ Plato, 'Phaedo,' c. 39, μισολόγοι, μισάνθρωποι.

astonishing, so fruitful. The hurry and heat of thought are correspondingly great. We pass on in our demands for knowledge, forgetting often the darkness and mystery which hang over the things of the soul and the spirit,—forgetting that, after all, these are the greatest things that man can care for. We make to ourselves a world and a state of society, in which what is most certain and inevitable in life is left out of the account—the lot of the majority, ignorance, poverty, helplessness, disease, bereavement,—the hourly tragedy of death, the sins of the world. In vain our broadening knowledge tries to give its own scientific precision to theories of human life ; to get rid of ‘ misty morals ’ and dreams of sentiment, the materials at once of our follies and blunders, and of our poetry, our affections, our heroism. Nature is still too strong : there is the void, and hearts will ache, and aspire, and despair : they may give up the Psalms, but they must have their poet and interpreter. We strike without being aware of it against the barriers which limit our faculties ; we cannot understand

why the clearness of thought attainable in the region of experience cannot be carried into the things beyond it. We chafe and are impatient at half lights, obscure glimpses; things 'seen through a glass darkly.' Yet nothing is more certain, I suppose, than that on the greatest subjects we shall never in this life get beyond them: and then comes the risk of that despair of reason which Plato spoke of—we look for too much; we ask from thought and reason what they cannot give us; we fall into confusion and perplexity, and we renounce in disgust the instrument we have misused. In the conflict of ideas round us the things at stake are great indeed. We cannot but employ our thoughts about them. Let us recognise the thinker's duties, his temptations and his safeguards. Let us believe what all experience shows, the large part which the qualities of our moral nature, its self-discipline and refinement, must have in all questions which touch what is moral and spiritual; how profoundly, however indirectly, intellectual work is influenced by modesty, reverence, honesty.

Be patient, be just, be tolerant, be hopeful, be humble. In our greatest differences, and in proportion as our own convictions are deep and serious, let us not be afraid to be equitable, considerate, generous. Let us not forget that we have duties to old truths as well as to new. Let us not fear to face our own mistakes, our intellectual failures, our rash and superficial conclusions. Suspect what has the mark of insolence, wherever you see it, as much as if it had the mark of untruth, or insincerity, or haste, or passion. And remember what an element *time* is in all growth : how much *time* alone does, in making troubled questions run clear ; how often what perplexes us to-day is all explained to-morrow : how what is tangled by dispute and confusion of thought may become unravelled by simply waiting. By simply waiting, our horizon widens — widens almost without our knowing it. We need all that we can have, in these subjects of unmeasured and unexplored vastness, to save us from being betrayed, by our want of power to embrace them, by poverty and incapacity of

imagination, by that 'shortness of thought,'¹ which in things of wide and far-reaching consequence, is the most fatal and the most unperceived of intellectual diseases. Those who undertake to woo Truth by their own courage and venture must not stumble at her conditions. They must not think it strange, if for that Divine Bride they have to serve the seven years, and then the seven years more.

When our Lord was upon earth, He bade men follow Him ; the spell of His presence drew them and they followed without delay. We are separated from those days by the quarrels, the mistakes, the doubts, the crimes and scandals of many centuries. Men must now often seek truth amid uncertainties and ignorance which are the legacy of those centuries, amid clashing opinions and loud challenges. How do we believe that He would wish us to behave? Would not He, who sympathises with every trial and distress of men, who to all who labour and are heavy laden opens the refuge of His con-

¹ Butler, 'Analogy,' pt. i. ch. i. p. 37.

soling arms—would not *He* wish us to guard carefully the processes of intellectual work ; to recognise its great place and function, and to keep it uncorrupt and pure ; not to shrink from its full play, but to be watchful over the heart and its temptations? "May we not read His lessons to an age like ours in those words in which the old Hebrew masters of the conduct of human life described the excellences and the pursuit of what they called wisdom and what we call practical truth ; its aim, its course, its difficulties, its reward? 'Even from the flower till the grape was ripe'—this is the language of the Son of Sirach—'my heart hath delighted in her . . . from my youth up I sought her. My soul hath wrestled with her, and in my doings I was exact. I stretched forth my hands unto heaven above, and bewailed my ignorance of her. I directed my soul unto her, and found her in pureness. I have had my heart joined with her from the beginning : therefore shall I not be forsaken. My heart was troubled in seeking her: therefore have I gotten a good possession.'¹

I should be disloyal to Him whom I believe in and worship as the Lord of Truth, if I doubted that such seeking would at last find Him. Even if it do not find Him *here*,—man's destiny stops not at the grave, and many, we may be sure, will know Him *there* who did not know Him *here*. Be the stages what they may, as rough, as strange, as prolonged as they often seem to be, true and earnest seeking cannot be in vain ; they will lead the honest and good heart to the truth, and at last to the light it longs for. They will lead to Him who has the secret and the cure of human blindness, as of human sin. They will lead to Him who has the key to every burdened soul, who hears the unuttered desire of every imprisoned spirit. None but He can help them, who is the Helper of the strong and the weak. None but He can give them what they want. And they who seek shall find. At least, let us who believe in Him be patient, during this short waiting-time of an endless life. Those whom He first called had more to endure. They had against them all the

appearances of their time: they had against them, more formidably than we have, the opinion of society, the deepest and the lightest. But they were patient. They despaired not. For they believed, as we believe, in One who should come to decide all controversies; who will reconcile all contradictions, and dispel all ambiguities, and light up all dark things. In His own time, He—and none but He can—will solve the riddle of life; and we, as St. Paul says, ‘*we shall know; even as we are known.*’

‘Hold thee still in the Lord and abide patiently in Him.’ ‘Hope in the Lord and keep His way.’ ‘The patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.’ ‘Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let Him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’ ‘The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.’ The voice of the Bible

is surely also the voice of reason. Only let us do our part now, not as children but as men. Only—to go back to where I began—let us have no sin against light and truth upon our conscience—no insincerity, no negligence, no hardness of heart—when we are on our deathbed.

SERMON IV.

SIN AND JUDGMENT.

ST. LUKE xiii. 23.

Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved?

IF we could imagine a person in feelings and habit of mind such as we ourselves commonly are, but possessed of complete knowledge, perfectly acquainted with the whole truth about such a matter as this, I suppose that his answer to this question would at last communicate to us his knowledge. He might, it is true, under certain circumstances, check us, as we check our children when they ask what it is premature for them to ask. He might say, 'You had better not ask me ; it is wiser for you not to ask, and safer not to know.' But with our common ideas about pushing enquiry as far as it will go, our thirst and claims for all knowledge we can get, our conviction that knowledge is

at last the best remedy for evils which at first it may occasion, and with our sense that all is wanted that can be had to clear up the difficulties of life, such a person would probably find that it was natural and fitting for him to tell us, at least in general terms, what he knew. With a question of such seriousness and the power to answer it, he might well think that it was his duty not to leave us in a darkness which he could clear up, but to let us know, come what might, the absolute and naked truth, as to what so deeply concerned mankind, as to what, both philosophically and practically, would fill up so large a gap in our thoughts. He would, I suppose, say that as far as he could answer such a question, we had a right to know, just as we should have a right to know, if we could find out the answer for ourselves.

‘Are there few that be saved?’ It is a question which, when the idea of a salvation exists, must often come unbidden, must often fascinate the mind with its solemn interest. And it has been answered often ; answered

decisively, answered confidently, as if it were a necessity that we should know, and that the answer should be clear; answered in both senses, yes, and no, and with equal positiveness.

We see how our Lord—knowing all things, knowing what was in man, seeing from end to end—answered it. ‘And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.’ He recurred to that figure of difficulty and peril—‘the narrow way and the strait gate—to which He had elsewhere added explicitly the warning which the idea carries with it in itself—‘and few there be that find it;’ ‘Many are called, few chosen.’ It is the familiar spectacle of human life in all its careers; and He directed their thoughts to the obvious and threatening likeness which the heavenly road, the road of duty and faith, has to all our experience of the present world: to the broad plain fact that in all things requiring effort, the few succeed, the many fail. That is the immediate, the important lesson.

But to the question itself He refused the direct answer. He refused the definite statement, needed for a theory or system ; He refused to say what He *could* say ; He turned the question solely to the questioner's personal and separate interest in it. To him the assurance was given, that as far as he and many others in his condition were concerned, the gate was narrow and the path difficult—a path of which the temptations were formidable and the risks great—a path which demanded the utmost care and effort to reach its end. But the view, clear and unambiguous, into the next world was refused to the enquirer. His only business now was with this world : the road through it to the next was one of hazard and exertion ; and many would at last be surprised to find that they had missed it.

This seems to me a typical instance of the way in which our Lord, and His Apostles after Him, dealt with things relating to the future state. He was the only Being who ever ap-

peared on earth who was able—who could be supposed by any one to be able—to draw aside the veil which hides what is to be. He could tell us *all*: and He has not told us all. He could tell us *all*: and He has pointedly refused to let us know what we sometimes ask so passionately. He has drawn certain broad, distinct, intelligible lines about the issues of right and wrong, and about the future of men in respect of them; and there He has left things. It is manifest that all kinds of questions connect themselves with His revelations, and importunately solicit answers. But to give these answers was no part of what He came for. There are some things so clear in His words that it would seem that there could be no mistake about them; but when we attempt to go beyond them by inference or conjecture, we plunge at once into darkness which only He could light up, and which He has not thought good to light up.

It seems to me idle to put out of sight that His words about the future, so far as they go,

are severe words. The New Testament is a very severe book, as well as a very hopeful one. It takes a very severe view of the world, and of the ways and conduct of men. And certainly our Lord's own teaching is not the least stern part of it. Look at it carefully and you will find how large a proportion the language of rebuke and warning bears to the language of consolation and promise: the one is as grave, as anxious, as alarming, as the other is gracious beyond all our hopes. He surprised by the freedom, the facility, the completeness, of His forgiveness of sin. Penitence won at once His sentence of release from guilt and fear. He shrank not from the abandoned and the lost. He spoke of their immeasurable value in His Father's eyes—the value of the one stray one, above the ninety and nine. They went into the kingdom of heaven before the self-righteous and the secure. The little ones of this world, the unconsidered, the helpless, it was not His Father's will that one of them should perish, and woe to him who should

make one of them stumble. But with these words of the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,' whose 'blood cleanseth from all sin,' come others, which make us tremble, for the very reason that they come from Him. For the sins of the miserable, the forlorn, the friendless, He has pity and compassion: but for the sins of the well-taught, the high-placed, the rich, the self-indulgent, for obstinate and malignant sin, the sin of those who hate, and deceive, and corrupt, and betray, His wrath is terrible, its expression is unrestrained. 'Better were it for that man that he had not been born;' 'O generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' It is undeniable, I suppose, that in opening new prospects to mankind, in calling for higher efforts, He has darkened and deepened the lines about difficulty, about danger, about failure *here*. In opening new views of goodness and hope, He has thrown new shadows upon sin, on our profound self-ignorance and self-deceit, our insincerities, our provocations. And He

has deepened and fixed the lines about judgment, about its certainty, its searchingness, its serious reality. The future rises 'in outline dim and vast,' with some features of appalling clearness : but these clear features are but few. There is little to inform us as to the *when*, and the *how* : little about the effect of the infinite divisions and interminglings of character so familiar to us here. Only an awful breadth of promise and of doom : and within it, the awful uncertainty :—'The first shall be last, and the last first.'

In this grave and soul-subduing subject, the future of men, especially as regards God's dealing with sin, two things have to be kept in mind : one is, the *prima facie* view of Scripture as to the future of sin ; the other is, the immensity of our ignorance.

1. What is the *prima facie* view of Scripture? Beyond the words of Jesus Christ and His Apostles no other information is even conceivable : and what is the natural impression derived from these words? It is, as it seems

to me, that the future is viewed in immediate and exclusive relation to this life as a life of probation, a life given for obedience and duty, and inextricably connected with it. To this life succeeds judgment; and judgment is always spoken of as if it were something complete and final. There is no perspective disclosed beyond the doom which follows it. The curtain falls; the drama seems played out: it is as if we were to understand that all is henceforth over. We have specimens, figurative specimens doubtless, of the great process and trial, specimens of the sentence; and the figures are taken from what is most decisive, most irrevocable in human life. The curtain drops: and whatever may happen afterwards, we are not shown it. The harvest of the world is reaped; wheat and tares are separated; 'all things that offend and they which do iniquity' are cast out of the kingdom of God: the harvest is the end of the world. The sentence is pronounced, the execution of justice follows: and after the Judge's acceptance, and the Judge's

rejection, there appears nothing more. It is the winding up and close of that scene of time in which we have all been so deeply interested ; henceforth a new stage of existence begins, into which the consequences of this life pursue us, but of which all the conditions are absolutely beyond our comprehension. But up to that consummation of our mortal state we are told what to expect in words which we *can* understand. We cannot misunderstand about the gathering of all nations before the Throne, about the great division to the right hand and to the left. We cannot misunderstand about the door shut on the unready virgin, on the prayer urged so eagerly but too late. We cannot misunderstand about the judgment passed on the 'wicked and slothful servant,' cast out to 'the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Whatever may be the measures and differences of sin, we cannot misunderstand about retribution, absolute, as terrible as words can describe it, on sin which has not been forgiven. We can-

not misunderstand the appalling significance, far as it is beyond our power to fathom it, of the 'wrath of God:' and the phrase belongs to the New Testament as truly as that of the 'love of God.' Of the closing retribution our Lord has used words and figures which have graven themselves deep in the memory and imagination of mankind—the eternal punishment (*κόλασιν*), the fire that never shall be quenched, the worm that dieth not, the place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels. What could our Saviour mean us to understand by all this? Surely He did not mean simply to frighten us. Surely He meant us to take His words as true. We may put aside the New Testament altogether: but if we profess to be guided by it, is there anything but a 'certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,' for obstinate, impenitent, unforgiven sin, sin without excuse and without change?

2. In the New Testament the curtain falls on great and distinct certainties—the certainties

of deliverance and acceptance, the certainties of failure and punishment. The terms in which these certainties come to us are in their purport clear and beyond mistake. But they are broad and general terms. And then begins the region of the unknown: the immensity of our ignorance: ignorance, the extent of which we are probably unable to understand; ignorance so obvious, that, as Butler says, 'a man must really in the literal sense know nothing at all, who is not sensible of it.'¹ Then begin conditions, which can only be shadowed forth to us in the dimmest and remotest way in any human words. Then begin changes which we cannot conceive. Then begin questions which we cannot answer. We, broken in from our youth to sense and custom, what can we even imagine *will be*, when sense and custom have passed away? Surely it would be one of the strangest things, were it not so certain, how imperfectly we recognise the gulf which separates us from the future, and the little we know of it. We talk freely about it,

¹ 'Analogy,' pt. i. ch. vii. p. 151.

as if it was a region of knowledge, or of possible discovery. And yet, if we think, who can even imagine what he himself will be a century hence? And what will all the generations of those who have lived be doing, what will be their conditions and their employments, in the great years to come beyond the grave? . . . who in his senses can really suppose that he either knows or can know? We know that there will be the blessed, in rest and joy, in the presence of God. We know that there will be the rejected and the lost. We know this from the assurances of Scripture, in direct word, in mysterious figure. And here the New Testament leaves us, in darkness, before the veil.

But questions do not leave us. The question of the text, 'Are there few that be saved?' rises in our thoughts again and again when we think of the unnumbered multitudes of mankind, when we meet them in crowded streets or great assemblies, when we stand in some place thick with graves. And when we think of their infinite varieties of character, of history,

of circumstances,—when we think that in each single soul the story of its life is really as complicated, as mixed with good and evil, as full of opposing tendencies and appearances, as any fiction of poet or novelist,—when we consider what each of us knows of his own life, its vicissitudes and critical moments, its falls, its recoveries, its relapses, its shame and anguish, its hopes and efforts, the frequent uncertainty on which side we were, whether on the side of good or evil,—when we pass in review, among those whom we have known in public or private life, their diversity of temperament, of aim, of principle, of conduct, their impulses, their attempts, what they have accomplished and what failed in, excellences in them dashed by unaccountable faults, defects relieved by strange and rare virtues—we are lost in wonder as to what is to become of them. Are there few saved, or many? and *how* saved? We know goodness and greatness here, but hardly *perfection* of character. How are the good and great to be *perfected*? And what

of the imperfect? the imperfect, as we know ourselves to be, as we know so many to be who meet us at every turn, as every one, from the most opposite points of view, assumes that the majority are,—the middle crowd between good and bad, who must go hence poorly furnished in character for any higher life? Such questions, I suppose, will present themselves to the end of time. There are guesses, there are opinions, there are Christian traditions, as to the mode of preparation, of purification, of training. But how much do they help us? Surely a man must have strange notions of what knowledge is, who thinks that he can ever really know.

Again, what about that which is beyond the Judgment, that closes the age and scene of time here? Is there any further purpose, undisclosed, or half disclosed, in the great order of God's government? What are we to think of texts which speak of the 'restitution'¹ of all things; of the 'earnest expectation'² of the

¹ ἀποκατάστασις, Acts iii. 21.

² ἀποκαταδοκία, Rom. viii. 19.

creature,' and its fulfilment; of the 'gathering together'¹ of all things in Christ; of all enemies put down under His feet;² of every knee bowing at His Name in heaven and earth and under the earth?³ What of the 'many stripes' and the 'few,' according as the servant did or did not know his Lord's will?⁴ of the 'sin unto death,' and the 'sin *not* unto death'?⁵ of the text which speaks of a sin not to be forgiven either in this world, or in the world to come?⁶ Must we not confess ourselves in the presence of dark sayings, meant for hope and for warning, but too fragmentary and incomplete for systems?—And then, what questions arise when we think of the mystery of sin, its depths which man's reason and judgment never sounded. We know its outside: we know some of its effects: what do we know of its dark inscrutable roots in the will and character—of its essential nature in itself, and in the eyes of the Most Holy? How can we measure

¹ ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, Eph. i. 10.

³ Phil. ii. 10.

⁵ 1 John v. 16.

² 1 Cor. xv. 25.

⁴ Luke ii. 47.

⁶ Matt. xii. 32.

‘what it may be,’ as Butler says, ‘for creatures, moral agents, presumptuously’ to introduce that confusion and misery into the kingdom of God, which mankind in fact *have* introduced’?¹ What may not the judgment, on it be, in a state of things in which it has been necessary for Christ to die, and in which He has been so largely rejected—in which the love of God has made such a sacrifice, and made it, to all appearance, so much in vain? ‘The wages of sin is death;’ it is the ground out of which the Christian redemption springs. But our thoughts range over the whole compass of all that is covered—rightly covered—by the name of sin, from the most fiendish wickedness to the infirmity of the saint,—from the sin that may not be forgiven and may not be prayed for, the sin unto death, to the sin which is not unto death:—our moral judgments attempt to estimate the infinite shades and gradations, so familiar in our reading and our experience, by which one seems to pass into the other; and

¹ ‘Analogy,’ pt. ii. ch. v. p. 238.

everywhere our ignorance meets us, profound, insurmountable. One set of thoughts arise, when we realise the full truth of concrete, living sin, not as it is in the poor, the ignorant, the misguided, the miserable who have been 'more sinned against than sinning,' but in the crafty, the proud, the insolent, the strong, in those who know well what they are about, and mean, cost what it may, hazard what they may, to have their will. But another set of thoughts spring up against these, when we remember the visible appearances of difference, of disadvantage and temptation, the countless forms of delusion and prejudice ; when we remember the crowds which know not their right hand from their left, when we remember the unexpected sparks of good in the worst and most debased ; when we remember, of many who are now far astray, fixed and rooted in evil, that never from the hour of their birth had they, as we call it, a chance of good,—that their eyes opened—from the very first opened—on evil, as if it were the one law of the world. What shall we say to these things ?

Who is sufficient for these things? Who has entered into the secret things of the judgment and purposes of God, or can go one step beyond what He has been pleased, for the guidance of our own conscience and conduct, to show us?

What, then is the right attitude of those who do not know, who cannot know, apart from what the New Testament has told us? What is the true attitude of those to whom Jesus Christ has refused to tell all that they might wish to know—whom Christ has bidden to be content with the twilight, and to turn their thoughts to their own duties, their own difficulties and risks? He has told us that He will judge and punish the wicked. Nothing can be more plain and certain in the whole Gospel than that the punishment of unforgiven sin will be something infinitely more awful than we have faculties to conceive. He has *not* told us how He means to deal with all the infinite and inscrutable problems, as we call them, arising out of human sin. Shall we persist in asking?

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shall we claim to be told? Shall we, on hints and notices which we do not fully understand, build up speculations, lay down our conclusions, and complete that which He left unfinished? Or is it not wiser to bring home to ourselves the extent of our real ignorance, and acknowledging the deep interest of such questions, frankly own that we have not the means of answering them? It is a humble position to take, while new knowledge of all kinds is flooding the world, while the human mind recoils from no enquiry. It may be said to be retreating from positions which great men, great teachers, great schools of theology in former days of very opposite tendencies, seem to have taken up. But however pressing the call, however tempting the motives, to a bolder and wider range of thought, to more peremptory inferences and definite anticipations, the sources and bounds of our knowledge remain where our Lord has fixed them. Is it not reasonable, is it not honest, to shrink from trying to get above them, from trying to force our

way through them? Need we be ashamed, on such ground as this, of a true and wholesome and reverent ignorance, proportionate to the facts of our condition, which refuses to push into the possibilities of the future with such imperfect and baffling appliances as we can use? Need we be ashamed of confessing, of urging, that what must govern all our thoughts on this subject is this our ignorance, and the absolute impossibility of our adequately conceiving what is to be? Need we be ashamed, standing before the 'great deep' of God's counsels and God's judgments, to resolve,—not, it may be, to put away these questions, perhaps we cannot do that—but to contemplate them in awful silence and suspense, as what neither wish nor thought of ours can affect.

If we want more—if we require an answer, it is not from the New Testament that we must get it. We must get it at our peril. We must assume that we need to learn and to say something about the future beyond what our Lord's teaching gives us. If we want to look beyond

the Judgment, to lay down definitely all that the 'restoration of all things' means, and what is the certain end and what the necessary limits of the retribution held up in the 'New Testament on those who have misused their lives and defied their consciences, we must go out of the New Testament. If it is urged that we cannot but believe that the circumstances of the future, however distant, will be so ordered that every sinful will and every character settled and hardened in evil must at last be overcome by God's goodness, must yield to it, and turn to Him in relenting obedience and hopeful love—if it be urged that any other view excludes compassion and hope from the kingdom of Infinite Righteousness and Infinite Love, it can only be said, that this is not the only case in which we have before us opposite sides of truth,—opposite certainties, opposite facts of experience, as well as opposite ideas of reason,—and where we have failed to find the reconciling clue and link. In forgetfulness of this, dreadful systems have been built up, one-sided, narrow, rigid, cruel ; and

men thought that they were contending in passionate loyalty for the sovereignty of God. In forgetfulness of this, other systems may be built up of a very opposite kind, which seem to make our Lord's most solemn words an exaggeration to terrify a rude age and unthinking crowd. Surely we are not yet in a position to frame a scientific Theodicy, in which the apparently conflicting principles of such a thing as the kingdom of God can be exhibited here in clear and manifest harmony: we cannot do so, for the simple reason that the attempt implies what has been called 'that infinitely absurd supposition, that we know the whole of the case.'¹ Doubtless God has so surprised us by His former acts of grace, by such an inconceivable interposition as the Incarnation and the Cross, that it does not become us to say that anything is impossible with Him, except to deny Himself. But still less does it become us—creatures such as we are, who know so little, whose hearts and minds are so feebly under control, whose wills

¹ Butler's 'Analogy,' pt. ii. ch. v. p. 243.

are so treacherous, whose passions are so blinding, either to narrow or to enlarge His words. If He has indeed told us of more than we supposed His words to mean, in God's name let it be shown. If not, let us take care what we are doing. We may be claiming to be wiser than the wisest, more loving than the most loving, who ever on earth partially lifted the veil from the unseen world, and in parable and vision disclosed its awful secrets.

‘Are there few that be saved?’ What is the measure of God's justice? what is the final consummation and upshot of God's government of this world? We see how our Lord answers. He leaves much for us to know—much that men would willingly fill in, not merely by surmise and hope, but by decisive inference and substantial knowledge. Is it feeble, unsympathising, insufficient, to answer as He answered? Is it a poor thing, a weak evasion, to answer still, after all our debates, as His words lead us to answer—‘We cannot tell?’ Are we violating His spirit, mistaking His guidance, when we declare

that we can say neither more nor less than He said?—*Can* we find out more—is it possible? would it be *good* for us to know more—could we endure it? It seems to me inconceivable that any one, who realises what he is talking about, can speak of what is to come in the unsearchable eternal future, except with conscious perplexity and stammering lips. And if it were credible that we had the *capacity* to know more, is it not perfectly conceivable, that the full truth would be more than we could bear; that we could not be trusted to know more? Has our actual use of what we know made it probable that we should have made a better use of what we do not know? Is not the lesson, both of what He has *said* so distinctly, and of what He has *refused* to say, a reasonable one? Does it not bar on the one side those confident solutions of the difficulties of life and eternity, those peremptory assertions about the scope and results of the Divine government, without which it is sometimes said that it is impossible to believe at all? And is it not, on the other hand, a warning

that we cannot be too serious and too guarded in all that we say of that tremendous subject, the punishment of sin? It is dreadful to reflect with what unthinking lightness it has often been spoken of—a thing which touches every one of us, a thing which no man could realise in another, one whom he had seen and known, without indescribable horror. It is a matter too fearful to be wielded at our pleasure according to the exigences of controversy, or as a coarse and ready expedient to terrify, to disturb, or even to insult those whom the preacher has not the skill, the sympathy, the patience to persuade and win. It is too far beyond our reach, for us to fill it up in our imaginations. It is indeed idle to talk of removing the influence of fear from the human conscience. But Scripture is more terrible in its mysterious reserve about the ‘wrath to come’ than any picture man could paint: there is more pathetic and awful meaning in the one word ‘the lost,’ than in any attempt of ours to expand the thought.

Let us submit to the conditions of our state

and of our knowledge, we, at least, who in the tempest and confusions of the world have as our one supreme guiding light the manifestation, the words of the Son of God. Who shall say that, though we must greatly fear, we may not also greatly hope, even if we are met by awful certainties, if we dare not say more than He has said? We cannot tell what is between the grave and the Judgment; but we know that the Living God is there, very terrible, very pitiful, very just, who leads His creatures by ways they know not to the end which only He knows. We may be sure that He will set right in His own way the inequalities of this world. We may be sure that all who seek Him in truth shall one day find Him, for He has said so. We may be sure that every one in every nation who feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him, for His accredited Apostle has said so. Is the righteousness of God too small a thing to trust to, unless we can say in detail how it is to be carried out? Are the 'multitude of His mercies,' to use a favourite phrase of

the Psalms, the 'multitude of His mercies,' to which saint and penitent must alike appeal—are they too stinted, too straitened, that we cannot commit to them all the infinite issues of human life, which move our fellow-feeling, our pity, our sympathy? Can *we* be so compassionate and so just, and cannot we trust Him to be so, unless He shows us how? Can we not trust Him, in silent and awful expectation, with the work of His own hands, sure that He will not despise it—sure that under the shadow of His wings all the countless multitude of His creatures, from the highest to the lowest, the worst and the best, shall find His perfect truth—sure that each soul will receive what it ought to receive, and will be dealt with as it ought to be dealt with, by infinite goodness and unerring justice.¹

¹ This sermon was written before the writer had seen Dr. Farrar's sermon on the same text.

SERMON V.¹

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

EPHES. iv. 11, 12.

And He gave some (to be), apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

THAT which is to us the most obvious and indispensable of employments, the Christian ministry, the consecration of life to the service of men in their moral and spiritual interests, was once a new thing in the world. Judaism had none of it. Heathen society, Heathen religions, at least in the West, had none of it. There were priesthoods, prophets, sages, teachers, rulers of the synagogue, scribes and elders, and doctors of the law. In heathenism, there were

¹ Preached at the Ordination held by the Lord Bishop of London, in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Trinity Sunday, 26th May 1872.

those who dealt with the unseen and the supernatural, soothsayers, sorcerers, charmers, devotees, who, by initiation into sacred mysteries, professed to heal, or soothe, or cleanse the souls of men. In later Judaism, there were those by whom its doctrines were widely spread, wherever it came in contact with heathenism; busy spirits, fiery zealots, makers of proselytes, and also, preachers of righteousness, holy and humble men of heart whose devout lives and words of truth touched and won to God Gentile converts like Cornelius and the Centurion of Capernaum. God did not want His witnesses, nor His kingdom its heralds. But the turning and gathering into one great channel all these ways of spiritual agency, cleansing the impure, rejecting the counterfeit, reinforcing and concentrating the true, this was one of the great changes and innovations of Christianity. The idea of a great ministry of reconciliation, with all its subsidiary ministries and stewardships and offices, the idea of a distinct use of human life, devoted, as to its governing and engrossing

object, to a perpetual aggression against human ignorance and human sin,—of an occupation as definite and as binding as a soldier's, in which teaching, comforting, warning, elevating human souls, should have the place of the ordinary pursuits of life,—of a call and mission, which set before a man as his appointed work in the world the communication, to all whom he could reach, of the grace, and truth, and peace of Christ,—this, one of the new gifts of Pentecost, came into the world first with the Christian Apostles ; it first appears on its true scale in the person of St. Paul, the reflection, in the great 'Vessel of Election,' of the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

What once was a new thing, is now an old one, firmly and permanently embodied in the characteristic organisation of the Church, and with its established and familiar place amid our habits of thought and life. Practice and experience ought to increase its advantages and power as time goes on ; after eighteen centuries of the most varied fortunes, of astonishing

successes and of the most terrible mistakes, it ought by this time to have learned well its lessons ; the level ought to have greatly risen, both of our thoughts of the purpose and work of the Christian ministry, and of its own capacity to fulfil its task. But with the advantages of long experience come the dangers of use and custom. That which in its idea is the divinest of earthly employments has necessarily come to be also a profession, a line of life, with its routine, its commonplace, its poverty and deterioration of motive, its coarseness of feeling. It cannot but be so. It is part of the conditions of our mortality. Even earnest purpose, even zealous and laborious service, cannot alone save from the lowered tone and dulness of spirit which are our insensible but universal and inveterate enemies in all the business of real life. And that torpor and insensibility and deadness to what is high and great is, more than any other evil, the natural foe of all that is characteristic and essential in the Christian ministry : for that ministry is one of life and

reality, or it is nothing. / An occasion like this, with its awful, touching, almost overwhelming solemnity, to some of us opening a new view of life and a new relation to their fellow-men, to others, breaking in on the regular course of their pursuits with the sound of that great commission repeated to others, which was once given to themselves—an occasion like this cannot but turn our hearts in upon themselves, to ask ourselves how we really measure the purpose and obligations of that ministry to human souls which we inherit from the beginning—how we measure the wants and circumstances of that world for whose sake it was appointed. \

What is that purpose? It is, it must ever be remembered, that same purpose, that and no other, for which the Christian ministry was set up, in those ancient days when the New Testament was being written. With all the changes of time and circumstance, with all its own infinite variety of functions, that ministry is still essentially what it was then, meant for

a great missionary institution. The reason why it exists is, to spread light, to strengthen and build up goodness, to carry on the never-ending war against wrong and evil and degeneracy. That astonishing work which we read of in the Acts, which we see going on in the Epistles of St. Paul, that is the work which must go on now, which must go on in every age, if the world is to be sought and gained for Christ. The contrast of conditions, of our accepted and settled religion with those days when it was breaking for the first time upon mankind, sometimes confuses us. Those, we imagine, were the times of sowing, of driving the plough into the fallows and the waste ; now are the easier times of reaping. Those were the times of attack and war, these of ordering our conquest in peace. Do not let us be led away by appearances. The times of peace, the times of reaping are yet a long way off. I should be the last not to recognise the infinite change for the better to which God in His mercy and His providence has brought the world as we

know it, from what it was in the days of St. Paul. But if St. Paul felt himself confronted by gigantic forces of darkness and evil, 'principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places'—if he, facing the world of his generation, saw before him what he has described in that tremendous beginning of his Epistle to the Romans,—can we think that if he were among us now, he would not see—with whatever most blessed alleviations of bright and heavenly light—that he would not see in the face of our modern world very much what he saw then? Ah! the warfare is not over, in its terrible and unceasing vicissitudes. The successes of to-day are reversed to-morrow: the ground gained by one man is lost by another; while behind the line of immediate struggle still lies the vast thick unshaken mass of human darkness, human barbarism, human selfishness, human degradation. There, my brethren, is the work before you: in the poverty which you cannot cure, in the misery

which you cannot abate, in wilfulness and folly which neither you nor any human power can check or guide, in the fierce, hard discontent which sets itself in deep distrust against God and the realities of man's lot ; in the mysterious and terrible inequality of conditions and advantages, in the monstrous abuses of God's lavish gifts ; in the selfishness of the fortunate, in the hard-heartedness of the comfortable, in the cruel wantonness and luxury of the idle. If there is all this in our modern world, and if Christianity is at once its antagonist and its remedy, here is the true reason why the Christian ministry exists. Do not flatter yourselves that anything short of this, anything short of what is set before the Apostles as workers and witnesses for God in the New Testament, is the field in which we have to labour, the war in which you have to be good and true soldiers of Jesus Christ. I know that for the clergy there are endless varieties of call, of function, of utility. There are pleasant places where the din of that war does not seem to come, where

the workman has only to keep up what has been built, to improve where the rough part of the labour has been already done. But when we are asking ourselves on a day like this, much more in this great sanctuary of the greatest of English, I believe I may say, of Christian, dioceses, what is the true mission and business of the Christian ministry, we must put it very high. To that ministry there stands over against it, the mass of all the real evils, of whatever sort, huge, unmanageable, which afflict and endanger society. *That* the Christian ministry has to fight, *that* it has to subdue—it may be, as it has been, in conquering it to suffer.

Measure, then, adequately what we have to do, what we are here for ; but also measure fairly the conditions under which we may do it. Our obligations seem to be enlarging beyond those of former times ; do not forget what the time offers of opportunity and of hope. Think merely of the increased strength given by the increased deepening in the hearts of the

clergy of the sense of their responsibility, by the increased elevation of aim and standard, by the prospect opening on nobler spirits of greater efforts and a widening field. We are living and working along with men whose souls are beginning to rise in earnest to the grandeur and vastness of the object for which the Christian ministry was appointed. And to meet this, never was there, I believe, a heartier response, not merely from the sympathy and enthusiasm of the young, though that is so remarkable, and with all its risks, so inspiring, but from the thoughtful, deliberate earnestness of the experienced and mature. Mischief-makers may try to set laity against clergy, may separate and contrast their interests ; never was there a time when the hearts of the people so yearned towards their guides. Deep, very deep in men's hearts, you may be sure of it, is—doubtless in very different forms, but it *is* there—the question of questions, the subject of subjects, religion, man's relations to God. Those who have not found are seeking ; and those who have

found, value what they have found in proportion to the dangers and the difficulties which they feel surround it. Do not think it any harm that in a matter like religion men really find perplexities, and ask questions, and take opposite sides. Anything is better than that they should not be interested; and the great mass of inert indifference which there always must be in human society, caring only for what is of this world, is shaken and disturbed by the anxiety of those who care, whether in hope, or doubt, or even despair, about another. The cry, the honest cry, on all sides is, 'Come over and help us, if you can.' There never was a time, you may depend upon it, in which earnest, thorough work was in less danger of being thrown away, was more likely to be recognised and to be felt. If we have something solid, and real, and great to offer—great, as the words mean of prophets and apostles to which we appeal,—we shall not offer in vain. On all sides, among the wandering crowds, among those who turn their backs on us and call

themselves our enemies, men are seeking eagerly and wistfully the unknown God, if only they could find Him. They ask no better than that we should be able to show unto them Him whom we know and have.

Measure the greatness of the wants, of the demands of our society, and you have the measure of that for which the Christian ministry exists, of that which it has to do. My brethren, you who are come here to-day to join yourselves to the company of Christ's ministers—in these words of mine which are the last unauthoritative ones spoken to you on the threshold of an eternal choice, I wish to urge on you to gain from the first, and to keep by every means in your heart of hearts, that true measure of the purpose and scope of your mission. The measure, the only real measure of your work, the real reason of your office, is the sin, the ignorance, the weakness, the unhappiness, which is all round us. I press it on you now, because all who have lived long enough know how easy and how hurtful it has been to forget it. The

excitement of this day will soon be over with you ; and when you settle down to the routine of life, even the pressure of immediate and definite duties may make *you* forget it too. And yet if you lose it, you lose the highest, the true reason for the life which you have chosen. You hear people say that it is not a high one ; that it wants a great and lofty idea ; that there are nobler paths for effort and sacrifice. They say that it is too easy ; that it is not free ; that it is too bustling, too much occupied and cut up with small anxieties and petty duties. It is, they say, a poor career for a man. Is it indeed ? This you may depend upon. *It is that which you make it.* It may be the highest, if you will ; it will be the lowest, if you will not make it high. It was indeed a miserable doom shadowed forth in the request which the outcast priest should make, ‘ Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest’s offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.’—But what has that to do in its sordid wretchedness with the office which is meant to be given you—‘ that is to say,

to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord : to teach and premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family ; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children that are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.' Is not that high enough, is not that attractive enough, for the largest thoughts, for the noblest aspirations, for the most earnest life ?

/ Between this day and the day of your death lies a tract of life unlike any other part of your life before ; a tract of life in which is to be done all that will be decisive of the part which you will have played in this your short trial time ; all that to you will make the difference between the use or the waste of it ; between the conqueror's end, or that of the cast-away. Pray and strive then that you may have a just and adequate idea of the service in which you engage. And pray that you may fulfil it like men, not like children, not like idlers. It is no conventional or make-believe warfare

which is before you. You have to reconcile old things with new, the oldest with the newest. Fervently believing yourselves, and living on your belief, you have to meet and enter into the thoughts of those who cannot or who will not believe. You have to accept changes, progress, movement, liberty; and you have, while accepting and feeling them all, to keep and guard the faith which cannot change. You have to be zealous and keen, knowing your own minds, and not afraid to speak them. And you also have to remember the difficulties of finding truth; you have to be forbearing, and justly, honestly tolerant; you have to be patient, as teachers of that eternal patience which belongs to man's lot, and marks God's present rule. You have to be busy men, with many distractions, with time not your own: and yet, if you are to be anything, there is one thing you must secure. You must have time to enter into your own heart and be quiet, you must learn to collect yourselves, to be alone with yourselves, alone with your own thoughts, alone with

eternal realities which are behind the rush and confusion of mortal things, alone with God. You must learn to shut your door on all your energy, on all your interests, on your hopes and fears and cares, and in the silence of your chamber to 'possess your souls.' You must learn to look below the surface; to sow the seed which you will never reap; to hear loud voices against you or seductive ones, and to find in your own heart the assurance and the spell which makes them vain. Whatever you do, part not with that inner sacred life of the soul whereby we live *within* to 'things not seen,' to Christ, and truth, and immortality. Your work, your activity, belong to earth; no real human interest, nothing that stirs or attracts or that troubles men in this scene of life, ought to be too great or too little for you. But your thoughts belong to heaven; and it is to that height that they must rise, it is *there* that in solitude and silence they must be rekindled, and enlarged, and calmed, if even activity and public spirit are

not to degenerate into a fatal forgetfulness of the true purpose of your calling—a forgetfulness of the infinite tenderness and delicacy, of the unspeakable sacredness, of the mysterious issues, which belong to the ministry of souls.

✓ May the Almighty and Everlasting God, who alone worketh great marvels, send down upon us all, in these days both of peril and of hope, the healthful spirit of His grace, to renew, in altered shapes, the marvels of the first days. May He give us, according to the Apostle's grand words, 'not the spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' And may He help you, my brethren, who are taking up for the time that is coming, the work, which we, alas! many of us, have done so poorly and unworthily,—may He help you to succeed where we have failed; may He help you to larger thoughts, and greater and more unselfish faithfulness, and more loving wisdom, and loftier aims, and a nobler hope; may He help you to be better than your predecessors;

help you to make indeed this His sacred ministry, what He intended it to be—the greatest blessing that He ever gave this world. \

SERMON VI.¹

THE TWOFOLD DEBT, OF THE CLERGY.

ROMANS i. 14.

I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

THESE words of St. Paul have become, like so many of his incidental words, a kind of proverb in the Church. But they are more. They contain the secret of the triumph of Christianity in the world; so far, I mean, as we can detect and measure the conditions of its success by human judgment: the secret of its astonishing hold, unique in all history, over a human nature, so powerful, so hard to master, in many respects so deeply alien to the influences to which it submitted. It is a secret of Christianity, which is expressed in common speech when men talk of

¹ Preached at the General Ordination in Wells Cathedral, on Trinity Sunday, 23rd May 1869. •

its elasticity, and which, looked at merely as a capacity for subtle and insensible adaptation, has provoked many, and some fatal, counterfeits; but which really means that being a religion proceeding from the Maker of mankind, it has proved commensurate with that endless diversity of character and destiny which their Maker has appointed for men on earth; and that it shows itself in perfect analogy with the way in which His power works in Nature, so inflexibly uniform and yet so profusely various; with such strange and remote differences of types, and with such equally strange freedom in them to be altered and transformed: 'making the creatures fast for ever and ever, and giving them a law which shall not be broken,' and which they cannot pass; yet making the world to be changed every year of its course.

A Religion for the world must be a religion for all times and lands, for all changes of society, for all forms of political life and directions of human activity; for all sorts and conditions of men, for high and low, for the Greek and for the

Barbarian, for the wise and for the unwise, for the few and the many, for the strong and for the weak ; because God, one God, made them all. And such we believe that the religion of Jesus Christ has proved itself. It has dealt with ages as dissimilar one from another as are the centuries from the first to the last of the modern world. It has dealt with national differences as opposite one to the other, as the east is to the west, and men of Asia to men of Europe. Born without a country, and almost beyond the shelter of the law, it has grown to be the impulse of high political duty, and to be the ally of the keenest patriotism. It has dealt with ignorance and coarseness, and it has dealt with cultivation and refinement. It has dealt with power, and it has dealt with poverty, infirmity, and sorrow. And it has dealt with the profound differences which are made between man and man, by mental endowments and by knowledge. It has dealt with the responsibilities of intellect and freedom, and with the need to be taught and guided. And in this long trial and testing it has not broken

down. Its results and fruits have been very various,—very unequal in their success. Men have used it strangely, and strangely understood it. Many a time it has seemed to be failing ; its force seemed to be spent : there were those who thought that it was coming to its end : the old world was sinking irretrievably into confusion and darkness, and a new world was coming, which was not for it. But the new world came : and the Church and Gospel of Jesus Christ, in spite of having to bear the mistakes and discredit of the old one, found a way to its ear and to its heart. The spring of life is there. Somewhere or other there is the strong unquenchable spirit of reform which has been in the Christian Church from the first ; the willingness to see and correct mistakes ; the undying tradition of improvement, undying, in spite of shortcomings and failure ; the capacity for fresh adjustment without losing its identity. The claim of morality to be the law of the world is not greater or better tested by experiment than the claim of Christianity to be the religion of the world. For the Christian

Church has taken into itself the feeling of its great Apostle's saying, and has seen in it the mind of his Master. 'Both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to wise and to unwise, am I a debtor.'

On an occasion like this, when there is so much more to say than can be said, and when all kinds of thoughts, remembrances, misgivings, prospects, come crowding upon us, it is well to choose and disengage some one point to think about, and fix our minds on it. Let us take this feature in the Apostle's conception of his office: a conception in which we find our great model of that Christian ministry, which exists for the work and service of the Kingdom of God, and in which many of us have, or are to have, our part. 'I am a debtor,' he says, 'both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.'

What the world of his day was to the Apostle, —what human society has ever been to the Church,—such, more or less, is the sphere and field in which every Christian minister has to

fulfil his calling. The Apostle's broad divisions still part society, and run through it in its most remote portions. It is a rough division, admitting of endless differences of degree when we look closely, and with much shading off where its boundaries meet. But it is a very real one, and the dividing interval is a strangely broad and deep one. Little as we often bring it home to ourselves, the separation which parts conditions is not so vast as that which lies between minds. Rich and poor, high and low, are words which mark great natural and permanent barriers among classes of men : but from the comfort and ease, the high estate and power of one class, to the narrow and pinched and precarious lot of the other, the distance, great as it is, is not so great as that between those who can know and think, and those who cannot ; between the classes represented by St. Paul's words, 'Greeks and Barbarians, the wise and the unwise,' the taught and the untaught. It is not in their outward circumstances, it is in themselves that the great gap appears. In-

deed, they are two different worlds; and a clergyman in the humblest of our country parishes finds, as he passes from house to house, that he passes from one world to the other. He passes from one set of people, to whom without any extraordinary gifts the general order of things is familiar, a society where what has happened in the world and what is known of it lies open, where the inherited thoughts and experience of former times are a common possession, where books and conversation and long use have more or less widened men's ways of thinking, and perhaps made them exact, enquiring, and impartial:—he goes from them to another, to whom the heavens mean nothing at all, and the earth only the field where day after day, from sunrise to night, they toil in the frost and in the heat for their coarse meals; who know their work, and measure all other knowledge by it; to whom everything outside them is bounded and hidden by an impenetrable cloud, broken only by the most fantastic delusions; whose meagre list of words hardly reaches

beyond the expression of the necessities of life, and the simplest elementary emotions of the soul. How are you to measure the interval between such minds and one which can even understand what great poets and mathematicians have thought and created? Two extremes, if you will, with infinite gradations between them; yet extremes which we are sure to meet with. True they are men: as men, both classes are one: one in their temptations, their sins, their lot, their hope; with common capacities of joy and sorrow, equally with hearts to love and to be broken; with a common rule of duty, living under the same levelling necessity of suffering and death. The difference is not in goodness,—God forbid,—nor in natural power, nor in practical judgment and wisdom. Nay, even with their scanty vocabulary, the poor are often, without knowing it, poets. The difference is between what one class *sees*, and the other *cannot see*, and, what is more, *never can see*. It is that it is simply vain to talk to the one class, at the point at which it stands, of what is of the

deepest meaning and interest to the other. The one is cut off from the habitual sphere of ideas in which the other lives : and it is impossible even to imagine one class passing into the familiar ways of thought of the other,—mastering, using, judging by them. The world was so divided in St. Paul's time ; with all its great changes, with all that is so much better in it, and all that is hopeful, it is so still.

And that is the world in which an English clergyman is called to do his Master's work, and carry on, in his measure, the functions for which the Church and his own order were appointed. He finds around him the 'wise and the unwise ;' those who know a great deal, and those who know scarce anything ; those called and competent to use and guide their own minds, and those who are dependent on what they hear around them, and who cannot take a step by themselves except in the dark ; those who, it may be, are far above him in power and cultivation and attainment, who can teach much of which he is ignorant, who know what

he, it may be, never can know: and those whom he must teach, and teach the first elements of truth, and who can do nothing but trust him; those to whose thoughts he must, as it were, grope his way, happy if, in some degree, he can understand a little of them, and carry to them something of light, of healing, of comfort. But to both he has his mission: both may be the better or the worse for what he does and says; to both he is, by the obligations of his awful service, the 'debtor.'

Such is our position, and it carries with it a double danger; the danger of evading our debt on one side or the other, of thinking of our relations and duty only to one; of shrinking from force and reach of mind and that which goes with it, independence and boldness,—or of shrinking from that slowness, dulness, mean and narrow hardness, which is the outside aspect of the mind of the untaught and poor. And hence the perpetual tendency of religion, among its many other dangers, to become either a mere philosophy to interest, if not to satisfy,

the enquiring and reflective ; or else a mere popular tradition, suiting itself to the multitude, and lowering itself to gain and hold them. And who shall say which is the worst evil ? When Christianity is made to stand aloof either from the 'wise' or from the 'unwise,'—when it is viewed simply as a refined theory, fit for those who can think powerfully and deeply, as the noblest attempt of human wisdom, and given over to vague interpretations and indefinite enquiry ; or, on the other hand, when its teachers cease to care for thought, knowledge, and truth:—either when the Church forgets that its first work is to seek the lost and preach the Gospel to the poor ; or when it seeks *only*, and by *any means*, to establish an influence which it intends to be salutary over the multitudes or the ignorant—it runs risks which experience shows are not imaginary ones ; it is in danger of becoming such a religion as *can only* be held or conceived of by the few who are able to investigate and study ; or, on the other hand, of sinking to the degradation of a popular faith

which can check unchastity but cannot prevent murder, or which can combine the extreme of enthusiasm with the extreme of dishonesty. I am sure man cannot weigh and balance these opposite mischiefs ; we shall never know till the day of judgment which has been the worse.

It is only by recognising St. Paul's obligation,—by recognising that there *are* these great divisions into which God's providence has parted men, and that the gospel is for *both*,—that the Church has escaped these mischiefs, or can hope to escape them : and it is well when we are starting on our work as individual clergymen, or reviewing it, to bring this double claim distinctly before our thoughts. We are sent, as the Apostle was, both to the 'wise and to the unwise ;' and on the measure we take of our duty to both, and our success in fulfilling it, depends, as far as *we* affect it, the position of the Church towards the people whom she claims, at a trying and critical time.

About our debt to the ignorant, there cannot be any question, and there is not likely to be

any. Our Gospel is emphatically the Gospel of the poor, and we are sent to be the servants of those who cannot help themselves. Of this part of our calling we are reminded at every turn ; it is the most obvious and natural, and seems at first sight, perhaps, the easiest part : it is not likely to be dropped out of sight or undervalued. Debtors we are to them, to take thought for them, to sympathise with them, to make their interests ours. Debtors we are to them, 'to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak.' Debtors we are to break through the mass of obstacles which rise up and keep us from their real thoughts and ways, and to find points of contact between their minds and ours. Debtors we are to them for wisdom, for patience, for considerateness ; debtors to them, to be honest and genuine and real with them in speech and bearing, and not to be tempted to take easy and dangerous advantages, even to recommend truth and to do them good. Debtors we are to the rude and untaught ; to those also to whom it is far harder to be of use,

the half-taught. Debtors to both, to help them to understand the awful truth and greatness of man's lot, and history, and hope ; his high fellowship with the unseen, his place in the family of God. The debt is none the less, that those to whom we owe it are utterly unconscious of how much it involves, and of the difficulty of discharging it. We often associate self-wisdom, self-conceit, self-will, with activity of mind and love of knowledge. We shall find that they dwell in equal measure with entire incapacity to know ; and that to be ignorant, does not mean to be teachable. Indeed, the struggle would often seem a vain and useless one, if it depended only on the direct results of what we can teach ; if beyond the dim and hampered intellect, there did not live the soul—the soul, beyond our fathoming, eluding our discipline ; yet alive to sympathy, alive to spiritual things ; open to grace, welcoming redemption, and springing up directly by faith and love to God. We are debtors to the weak and ignorant for all that we can give them ; debtors to them, to overcome

our fastidious tastes, to condescend to men of low estate, to remember in our words and acts their confined and slender range of comparison and judgment ; but we cannot have much experience of them without being reminded at every step that their true Teacher, He who really has the key of their hearts, is out of sight. Let us remember this, and that we are working with Him in a work of which He takes the chief share, when our debt to the 'unwise,' the untaught and poor, weighs, as it will painfully do, on our minds. Among those crowds, who so imperfectly understand us, and whom we find it so hard to get near to in mind,—who have neither time to read nor force or habits to think,—who hear high things talked about, nay, perhaps are invited to judge of them, about which it is simply impossible that they can have the first elements of a judgment,—among these, on whom the labour of teaching seems to the hasty observer thrown away,—as among the slaves and soldiers and obscure provincials among whom St. Paul chiefly laboured,—there are those

to whose dim eyes and weary souls the words and triumph of Christ have come with light and comfort ; who have been quickened, refined, ennobled by them, who are fully alive to the greatness of God and the awful issues of life. In heart and spirit at least, they are not the impenetrable creatures they seem to be in mind. We may rely upon it, our debt to them, if honestly and faithfully paid, will not be paid in vain. Our work may not produce the results which we, when we are doing it, intend and wish for. But God's servants do not always know the work for which He sends them, or the real purpose in which their service is to result ; and their indirect influence is often more important than their visible and direct achievements.

The poor, the 'unwise,' are our special charge ; our charge in a sense in which they are the charge of no other class or body of men. They are those whom Jesus Christ chose to live with, and work for, and out of whom His Apostles built His Church : and no one is, or is felt to be, charged with them as the clergy are ; they are,

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in one sense, the very reason of our existence. But our debt is not only to them ; we touch with one hand what is the lowest, and with the other, what is very high in the scale of society. It has always been so more or less ; but we must know that we now, by our education and by our habits, are more than ever brought into contact with those who are fully conscious of the powers which God has planted in man's mind, and who are eager in their use. No generation probably can judge its own time ; but whatever we are, thought is active, and bold, and hopeful ; it has achieved much, it is adventurous after much more. We have to meet it ; we, the witnesses of a great actual gift of God in the past ; we, the ministers of an unseen hope. Minds are busy all round us, asking questions, pushing conclusions, examining foundations, interpreting facts ; doing all this with very various tempers, animated by very different spirits, some of envy and strife, some of wanton and idle mischief, some also of good-will and honesty ; doing all this with unlooked-for and

startling results ; changing the look and proportions of the most familiar things, finding new objects for man's interest ; and amid much that is full of glorious promise, letting us see prospects of the most tremendous meaning,—threatening and ghastly and hopeless as man can imagine or dream—the return to a world without Christ and without God.

We cannot stop this great movement of men's minds ; we ought not to wish to stop it if we could, for we should certainly not know how, and should only do harm : directly, I suppose, we cannot do much to control it. It will take its course. It is in truth very much of it the opening of men's eyes to unknown works of God, among which they have been living for ages without understanding them ; the unstopping of their ears, to catch more fully and more truly His voice that sounds in nature. It has given new meaning to the ancient words of the Psalmist : ' O Lord, how glorious are Thy works ; Thy thoughts are very deep : Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works, and I will

rejoice in giving praise for the operation of Thy hands.' God has allowed men to find in His world new fields to explore, new glimpses of His glory; *tradidit mundum disputationi eorum*.¹ And, like any other great movement, it has raised up around it accompanying clouds of human folly and vanity and sin. But it follows irresistibly its own path; and how shall we think lightly of that which leads men deeper and deeper into more clear knowledge of God's real doings? But still, it is not our path. Ours is a still more wonderful, more mysterious, more eventful one. Our awful ministry starts from the foot of the Cross on which Jesus Christ died, from the Grave from which He rose, from the mountain whence He went up; and it looks forward, as to its close and goal, to the Day when we all shall stand before Him. We are the messengers of a divine forgiveness, ministers of a divine reconciliation, heralds of an everlasting peace. We are sent to feed the flock of God, to be gatherers of wandering souls

• ¹ Vulgate translation of Eccles. iii. 11.

into their Father's house, the stewards of His mysteries, the preachers and prophets of the Light of the World. There are many orders of work in God's world: and that is our work.

And with this great work in our hands, we come across whole vast provinces of human thought, thought of the most powerful and commanding kind, by which it *seems* to be challenged, or threatened, or pushed out of account. We are conscious all round us of a fervour and conviction and energy, which cares nothing for what we care for, and owns no sympathy with us. We meet with men, serious, earnest, knowing much and alive to duty, to whom all that we hold dear is simply and hopelessly a blank. And then there are the numbers of minds not yet made up, wavering and swaying amid the strife of tongues; knowing all that is going on, and keenly acted on by currents of opinion and apparent tendencies; not yet alienated from us, but watching, waiting, observant, changing perhaps with the last and

loudest word, slowly and insensibly settling down into a state of mind which is to last.

‘Both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to wise and unwise, I am debtor,’ said St. Paul. Can we say less? We have a debt to all this mass of intellect, doubtful, indifferent, hostile, sometimes so fair, sometimes so unfair, but for the most part so clear and so versatile, which sways our society. Perhaps we cannot look to making much direct impression on it; but we owe it a debt nevertheless.

We owe it, we all know, the debt of a witness to the Faith, distinct, outspoken, unshrinking;—we owe it the debt of an earnest and fearless witness of the truth and depth of our convictions: we owe it the debt of showing that we are not ashamed, not even now, of the Gospel of Christ. Indeed, with such ages behind us, we have nothing to be ashamed of; we have nothing to fear for that future, which the religion of the Bible, alone among religions, persists in declaring to be its own. But we owe it the debt of showing our convictions, as wise and

self-commanding men show them ; men, penetrated with the greatness of what they support and the greatness of what they oppose ; penetrated, too, with the entangled and complicated character of all human questions. We owe the debt of keeping from ignorant and indiscriminate hostility ; of not assuming *to ourselves* and our own persons, with empty and boastful impertinence, the superiority and the sacredness of our cause : of keeping clear of that dreadful self-complacency, which so often goes with imperfect religion. We owe the debt of not raising false issues ; of not meddling with what we may know that we do not understand ; of not darkening counsel, hard very often to reach at best, with a multitude of ill-considered words. We owe it to our august ministry, we owe it to those who observe and perhaps oppose us, to be brave, to be honest, to be modest. Perhaps it is all we can do. Probably it is the best we could do for them.

We owe them eminently, we, the representatives of the faith and teaching of Christ's

Church,—we owe them eminently, besides the debt of a Christian example and temper, the debt of real and painstaking knowledge. We owe it to the Church, we owe it to the time in which God has called us to labour, we owe it to the restless and perplexed but often honest minds in whose presence we carry on our ministry, to be not merely a hard-working but a learned clergy. To these great questions which both stir and disquiet men, we are bound to bring that knowledge which will give us a claim to be listened to. ‘Know as much as you can;’—that ought to be the rule to which an educated clergyman should hold himself for ever tied. A clergyman ought to be a *student*,—a reader and a thinker—to the very end. ‘I am still learning,’ said the greatest of artists in his old age of fame.¹ Nor, if there is the will, the habit of self-command, is that incompatible with a very busy ministry. At least, his own great subject he should seek to know, in the way that other things are known now

¹ ‘*Ancora imparo.*’—Michael Angelo.

by those who care for them. No man can know everything; but the men who influence the thoughts of their time are not those who try to know all things, but those who have learned one thing so well, that they know and show to others also, *what knowing means*. 'Know as much as you can,' should be our first rule:— 'never, as far as you can help, speak a word beyond what you do know,' should go with it. Whatever is wrong, irreligious, unchristian, meet directly, and meet it because it *is* wrong, and not on by-issues; but where it is a question of supposed consequences, or where possible inferences or applications look threatening, or when some complicated debate arises of which the bearings and range are not easy to master, it is both wisdom and it is faith to be slow to speak. And let us not get into the way of frightening one another, and exaggerating what may be, or may seem, unsatisfactory and dark. I know there is enough to make the steadiest and calmest mind feel sometimes anxious: and yet I find it hard to lay my hand on any

previous time, when thoughtful men had not as much reason to feel anxious. Still, no doubt, danger is round us : but there is a vague way of dwelling on dangers, fears, distresses, which at last rolls up into something considerable, and from meaning little at first becomes formidable in the end. Let us remember that what is true loses its weight at last by habits of idle and loose overstatement ; and that Christian warnings and protests are too solemn to be lightly wasted.

Do not be tempted to frighten others, when arguments perhaps are not at hand. And do not you be frightened. ‘ He will not be afraid of any evil tidings,’ says the Psalmist of the religious man : ‘ for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.’ We all of us know that there are loud voices abroad in the world, and, alas ! calm and grave ones too,—calling us, in the name of Truth, to give up the one guiding light of the world. In the name of Truth we must follow where Truth leads us : but in the name of Truth, do not let us, bowing

before an intellectual tendency which is the accident of a time, be false to our deepest, most irresistible convictions, to our most solid, obstinate assurances both of mind and heart. Let us remember that the love of truth, like anything else, may turn into an idol and a snare : that self-will can unconsciously substitute itself for it, and that a scornful contempt of what is public and common can transform itself into that 'Angel of Light.' Let us not commit the folly and crime of quailing and being cowed, because clever men of the world go about pronouncing that all is uncertain. Let us meet them, let us pay our debt to them, by thinking as we ought to think,—not *talking* but *thinking*,—of our great trust and ministry. Be among great thoughts of what you have and are called to ; think of what you inherit : think of all that you come after, and how the Gospel you preach has made good its words. It is only when we sink to low and mean thoughts of the greatest of ministries, that the words and sophistries of this world have their power and

wound. No, we are not dreamers, we have the rock under our feet, when we declare that in Christ crucified is the salvation and hope of the world. Let us not be scared by the phantoms which seem to rise up between us and Him. Let them not drive us from our soberness into unmanly and unbecoming ways. *Ausus vana contemneret*,¹ was the word said of old of a great captain who saw through the emptiness of a power which cowed the world, and who dared to make light of it. Let us dare to face the truth; but let us dare, too, to trust our own great cause and hope. Let us dare to look at the 'swelling words of vanity' which cross our path, and see unmoved their hollow terrors. The cause of Christ is not of to-day or of yesterday. Clouds and darkness, as well as light, doubt and perplexity, and a strange blending of fortune and success have attended it through the vicissitudes of its long history :

¹ A favourite quotation of Bacon's; (from 'Liv.' ix. 17). See 'Nov. Org.' i. 97; 'Adv. of Learning,' i. v. p. 33. Clar. Pressed.

I suppose they will attend it, till we 'see no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face.' It is no new thing that they are part of our trial. Never let us be so weak and cowardly as to complain that our trial is exceptionably severe, and to think it strange that our difficulties are the real ones of grown-up life, and not the imaginary ones of children.

'God,' says the Apostle, 'hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.' Let us not, who seek to work for God, hold cheap the calls of that high service: let us not with faint hearts shrink from them. Let us take care that we see our duties: let us not be afraid to take their full measure. Then we may trust that He, who has made the history of the Bible the history of weakness made strong, and of faith prevailing over every temptation to despair, will help us to do what He has called us to. May He inspire and guide and bless us: may He help us to be wise, help us to be true, help us to be unselfish and straightforward, help us

to be noble-hearted, help us to be faithful ; till we give up the charge received here, at the foot of His Everlasting Throne, who, we believe, shall come to be our Judge.

SERMON VII.¹

THE CALL OF GOD.

LUKE i. 38.

Be it unto me according to thy word.

IT was the answer of profound and humble obedience to the greatest call ever addressed from heaven to a mortal creature. The call, sudden, undreamt of, overwhelming,—interrupting in the most startling manner the daily course of an obscure human life, breaking in on its privacy, and laying on it the most awful of charges—was a call to prepare for being the instrument of the final and complete accomplishment of God's highest words and most amazing work. It was a call to be the last link in a chain which, beginning from God

¹ Preached at the Ordination held by the Lord Bishop of Salisbury, in Salisbury Cathedral, on Trinity Sunday, 11th June 1876.

Himself and composed of that august line of chosen souls who in all ages had carried forward His purpose and His promise, was to end in man brought at last to the utmost and most inexpressible closeness unto God—the human Mother of the Eternal Son. It was a call to such a destination and to such a pinnacle of unearthly and unapproachable greatness, that the consequences involved in it, and the price which it might exact, must have confounded and baffled all anticipation and forethought :—only it was inconceivable that such glory should not carry with it a corresponding burden ; and what might have to come before the glory, who could conjecture? What might not she have to be, to do, to endure, to surrender, to look forward to, who in a moment learned in the depth of her obscurity that she had been chosen and was called out of all mankind to be the mother of the ‘Son of the Highest,’ the ‘Son of God,’ the ‘Christ.’ It is idle, it is profane, to attempt to imagine the mind and soul of a human being like ourselves at such a

moment. In its sudden translation and lifting up out of all the ordinary conditions of human life, in the tides of honour and rapture, of crushing shame and consciousness of the Divine Election, of possible sacrifice and certain triumph, it could be like nothing that man has ever gone through. But whatever passed before the thought of that blessed one while the angel's words were setting before her the lot to which she had been appointed, and the place she was to fill in the eternal history, her instant expression of character was that of absolute self-surrender to all that she was called to—of perfect readiness for all that might be required of her. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.'

One great part of the history of the Bible is the history of calls, widely different indeed in their circumstances, but alike in this, that they were a claim from Almighty God on the will and choice of man for a free and unconditional service. It is the history, too, of the way in which the claim was met ; and, it was

met variously—variously in the perfectness of the response made to it—variously in the struggle and discipline through which God's call at last asserted its supremacy. Abraham, when he was called to leave his father's house, 'went out not knowing whither he went ;' when he was called to offer up his only-begotten son, he obeyed without a word. Balaam deceived himself into thinking he was called, and when his first self-deceit was broken, thought he could still reconcile obedience with a love of the wages of iniquity. Barak obeyed the call, but with the thought that it was to be first for his own honour, then for God's purpose in calling him. Samuel's childish 'Here I am,' 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth,' was the unconscious dedication of a lifetime of service. Saul's noble promise and generous modesty had with it the fatal root of an uncurbed self-will, which early made it clear that he had been called in vain, and which grew to a giant-power of ruin in his character and his fortunes. And who shall tell the mystery of

David's call and of his fulfilment of it—'taken away from the sheepfolds' and answering with 'faithful and true heart' to his great charge; and then passing off the stage of life amid sin and sad repentance, with the sword ever in his house, and a 'dreary gift of years:' the man after God's own heart, fulfilling all His will, yet with a course scarred with misery, and a name stained with guilt and blood. Peter and Andrew in their fishing, James and John in the ship with their father mending their nets, Matthew at the receipt of custom, Nathanael, curious to see the new prophet whom his friend had found, are called, and the sacred story marks the immediateness and the completeness with which they made their venture of obedience. 'They straightway left their nets and followed Him;' 'They immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him;' 'He left all, rose up, and followed Him;' Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.' Here was no struggle, and the after life answered to the

completeness of the self-surrender. ' But of the two sons in the parable, one said, ' I go, Sir, and went not,' and the other refused to go, and after repented and went. The rich young man whom Jesus looked upon and loved could not prevail on himself to accept the terms of the call, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. The true thoughts of their hearts were revealed by the Lord's words to men too forward or too cautious in their following of Him :—' The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head ; ' ' Let the dead bury their dead ; ' ' No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' And in the manner of the call, what contrasts—between the call by outward sign or voice, and that by inward increasing conviction : by dream and vision, or by hint from occasion or emergency, or by the slow, irresistible leading of experience ; between Isaiah, called by the vision of the Seraphim and the touch of the coal from the altar, and Amos, summoned from following the flocks in Tekoa, and Daniel, gradually

trained for his mission, amid his self-denying efforts to keep himself pure. How great the contrast between the thrice-repeated call in the midnight darkness and stillness to the child Samuel ; between the voice of the great angel of the Salutation announcing to Mary her part in the salvation of the world ; between Jesus calling with the voice of a man, and yet such a voice as had never been heard before, the fishers and publicans by the Lake of Galilee ;—and that terrible midday revelation of the very truth, which shattered the pride of Saul the Pharisee, which stopped the career of Saul the persecutor, and through blind and helpless agony, carried to his soul the message that God had need of him.

The calls of God are very various in their circumstances ; and they are met in very various ways. But wherever they meet us and in whatever form, there is but one way of meeting them which carries with it blessing and hope ; the way of humble and honest acceptance, of unfeigned self-dedication, of modest and yet reso-

lute determination, of which the highest and purest expression is the answer to the most wonderful call ever made to man, 'Be it unto me according to Thy word.'

To-day is a day of calls. To every one present, such an occasion as that which has brought us together is in one sense a call—a call for the first time, or a call a hundred times renewed and repeated ; a call, bearing on some 'vocation and ministry' appointed in God's order to every member of His Church, and from which no one may without guilt excuse himself : a call, which raises the memories, sad or thankful, of the past, which holds up before us claims and duties from which there is no escape. All, in the grave and awful words heard in this service to-day, may hear what touches themselves, and recognise a voice appealing to their own conscience. But to some here, the call is no indirect, oblique, intermediate appeal. It strikes *them* full. It singles them out personally and by name. To hear it addressed to them is the reason why we are

gathered together. All the previous preparation and waiting is over : the balancing, the self-scrutiny, the consultations, perhaps the scruples, the uncertainties, the hesitations ; the searchings of heart ; the prayers for guidance, the recourse to the sympathy and help of friends. The way seems plain, purpose has gathered clearness and strength ; what the will of God is, what God means you for, you have tried your best to ascertain, without deceiving yourselves. Each of you has gone through his own history, has had his own trials, has taken his own view, higher or lower, of what he was looking forward to, has more or less carefully sounded the depths of his own motives. And now the time is come. You stand waiting for the final call. You have been thinking of it, imagining it, preparing for it. It will come to you presently. It will be really made. It will be an hour such as you have never passed through in your lives before ; the call, however absolutely different in outward circumstances, yet really the same as that addressed to Prophets and Apostles ; the call to

devote your lives to God's special service: the call of the Lord of the Church Himself, selecting you from your brethren, claiming you to be His own. From all who care most for you, from all who love you best, can any fitter wish and prayer go up for you than that the answer of each one of you to your call may be, in the deepest sincerity—the answer really made to God, though made through His minister—‘Be it unto me according to Thy word.’

‘What is it that is involved in that answer? It is no mere passive resignation and yielding to the Divine call. It is not merely shutting our eyes and saying ‘Let what He wills come on me.’ It is more than that. The call comes to living souls, to human consciences, to human wills, to human purpose. It asks for more than acquiescence and submission. It asks for conscious, deliberate union with the Divine Will. It asks that we should associate and identify our own real wishes and desires with what we know of our Master's: and that we should *work* in His cause, as all men work for a cause

they have at heart. No, my brethren, this answer to God's call is not a mere acceptance, however humble, of solemn impressions; it is not merely seeing, in what we call the accidents of life, the finger or the eye of God: it is not merely interpreting the ordering of our life and its events as providential. It is the response of the obedient and ready *will*. It is the response of the soul which is its own master, feeling itself summoned to fulfil the end of its being—to be that link in the chain of God's designs, for which it was created, and for which life and spirit and reason were given it. It is the taking upon us the charge which it has pleased God to assign us, with its conditions, its responsibilities, its ventures. It is the offering up of what we are, to do our best for our Master.

It is the response which I am sure many of you are making with very full hearts and unshrinking purpose. It seems almost impertinent, at such a high moment, for human words of either encouragement or caution to come

between your souls and their own thoughts. And yet it may not be unfitting, humbly and in deep sympathy, as one who once felt what you are feeling, and has had the experience of a lifetime after it, to remind you to mingle with the awful impressions of the present some attempt to look forward to the future, when these impressions will have to meet the wear and tear of daily life, its wearisome details, its routine, its surprises. Life must be to you what it is to us all ; it must have its disturbing hours, its dulling, and benumbing, and lowering influences ; and what you will have to do—what we all have to do, and find so difficult,—is, to keep fresh and sovereignly paramount in your souls the convictions and the resolves of to-day.

You, I am sure, are some of you thinking of this, and how you will be able, in the rough work of even a clergyman's life, to hold fast unimpaired the answer you are now giving in all sincerity to God's call. Let it then be, if I may venture to suggest it to you, let it be a distinct and primary object in your plan of

life—for a plan of life I suppose you must all have been thinking of in some shape, more or less definite, or perhaps more or less vague—let it be a distinct and primary object in your plan of life, to provide for keeping up in your minds the sense you now have of the greatness of your call, and of your own answer to it—of keeping it up, and of deepening and strengthening it, as time and experience teach you, as the grace of God enlarges, softens, trains your heart. Let it be part, and a governing part, in the order and arrangement of that new life which is beginning for you, in what you pursue, in what you choose, in what you are busy about, that a place should be found for bringing yourselves systematically, continually, face to face with that Divine purpose concerning you, which has chosen you and brought you here to-day. Think of it as it is, as it is put before you in the Ordination Service, not according to the transient accidents which may accompany it, as it gives you influence, or secures social position, as it clothes you with privilege and honour.

It is much, indeed, if there were nothing more, to be members of so illustrious a public body as the clergy of England; to be the inheritors of such a history, to be the guardians of the moral interests of so great a nation. But though you are this, you are more; and woe to you if you forget it. Besides all this, you are the servants and ministers of the Crucified. He on high is your Master, and to Him your account has to be made. It is for His purposes that you are chosen: it is His gifts, His word, His sacraments, that you have to convey to men. You may, indeed, in a wonderful and increasing measure, be the ministers of the highest earthly blessings to men: but it is the blessings of the world unseen, blessings for weary and endangered souls, blessings for those who have no other hope left them, blessings purchased by the blood of the Eternal Sacrifice, and running on through death into an everlasting life—it is with these that you are specially charged. Do nothing, admit nothing, in the way of employment, in the way

of recreation, in what you allow to yourselves, which shall confuse and obscure the thought that yours is a spiritual ministry and stewardship held direct from Jesus Christ, and that you, as He had, have to do with souls.

And let me remind you, if you will, that you must yourselves *exert* yourselves, to keep alive the remembrance of what you are called to. Circumstances alone will not do it. The sights that daily meet you, the habits and necessities of your work will not alone do it. The spring of awakening energy and self-command must be in yourselves. Do not trust a fashion or a prevailing opinion, however good it may be. Be truthful to your own selves, to what your own hearts tell you, to what is at bottom the verdict of your own judgment and your own conscience. What men have most reason to be uneasy about for their own personal condition is the soundness of their motives, the thoroughness of their character. Rules, if wise, are good : daily self-examination is good : special and solemn retreats are good. But nothing will

avail, without the living will, the self-impelling, self-governing spirit, which thinks, and watches, and chooses. Do not think to secure yourselves by the atmosphere which you breathe, the higher level to which religious feeling may have risen. It may be quite true that the public conscience is much more alive than it was; that it is easier and more natural in your time to fulfil what a clergyman is bound to than it used to be a quarter or half a century ago. But do not think that this alone will guarantee your thinking as you ought of your duties, or fulfilling them. It has been truly said that 'the real virtues of one age are apt to become the spurious ones of the next.' It is the fatal tendency to deteriorate which belongs to the highest things that men achieve. The truths of one age become the exaggerations of another. The enthusiasm of one becomes the routine of the next. The reverence of the first generation becomes the affectation or the superstition of its successor. The free-will offerings of one become the impositions and the yoke of the next.

Earnestness in one hardens into intolerance in another ; independence develops into license ; sympathy and allegiance to a great example dwindle into mere ignoble copying and stupid imitation. We of the clergy live what have been called 'protected lives.' We are sheltered by our profession from the rougher trials, the common temptations which test the principle and the goodness of other men. We have all the more reason to be true with ourselves ; may I not say to be severe with ourselves ? We have all the more reason to see that we do not drift indolently into mere fashions of goodness : all the more reason to waken into life that eye within, that secret, inscrutable activity of will, by which a man thinks his own real thoughts, and makes his own genuine choice, and is his own real self in what he judges and does.

You must take vigilant care of yourselves within, and you must look out of yourselves for your model and your Help. He who has been called, in what He was on earth, the 'Life of our life'—'*Vita Vitae nostrae*'—and who is this to

the lowest as to the highest of His members, is specially the 'Life of our life' to His own ministers. For what is your office and work but carrying on still that ministry which He, in addition to His specially redemptive work, first carried on among men. 'In Him you see what you have to do. In Him you see the spirit in which to do it—what manner of men, in feeling, in character, in behaviour, in aim, they ought to be, who continue His ministry. In Him you learn what we are so ready to forget, that it is not merely the work done, but the way, the meaning, the temper in which the work is done, that shows whether we understand the Gospel story and what it teaches. In Him, in His way of working, all is complete, balanced, harmonious; there is nothing missing; there is nothing overgrown or disproportionate. There is tenderness and sympathy which none can gauge; there is sternness and severity, rebuking and alarming; there is terrible judgment, which appals and crushes. There is, in its place, the fearless rough word of righteous wrath; in its place, too, there is

the gentle, sparing, pitying word of forgiveness and comfort. Does He despise men for their foolishness, and meanness of spirit? No, for these poor weak men He is ever helping and encouraging, condescending to their condition, bearing with their weakness, providing for their need. Does He care about what men care about, and what they can give Him? No, for He avoids their homage, and passes by without a look all that they admire and covet. All in that divine life and ministry, with all its marvels and vicissitudes, is so calm, so even, working out its course without violence or strain, like the daily or yearly march of nature, at once so mighty and so equable and still. He is never idle, but He is never busy. He is ever at work, but never hasting, never hurried; always in public, yet always in retirement. Barely do we read of His rest; but He is always ready, always has time, always patiently waits till the hour shall come. What a contrast, in our idle, easy-going, aimless lives—in our flurried, excited, impatient, meddling activity—our inconsistent, ill-jointed

behaviour—what a contrast to the life which He by His example would teach us to lead.¹

If you would be what He would have you be, that Life must be your perpetual, unintermitted study. In this sense also may you breathe to Him the prayer, 'Be it unto me according to Thy word.' May you above all things make up your minds to-day, in this beginning of your career, that you will try to keep before you, as the pattern and touchstone of your ministry, the Life of Christ. It is, of course, impossible to provide now for all which that career, now opening for each of you, may require. But the thoughts which are strong and uppermost to-day are likely to stay, and to recur. And therefore I ask you to give a place, among these thoughts, to the resolution that the devout practical contemplation of our Lord's history shall be one of the indispensable companions of the life which you are giving to His service.

I cannot do better than, in conclusion, to put this before you in the words of an old writer,

¹ Cf. Jer. Taylor, 'Life of Christ.' Exhortation, § 8.

who had learned what it was to realise to himself the way in which our Lord conversed with men:—

‘Always and everywhere have Him devoutly before the eyes of your mind, in His behaviour and in His ways; as when He is with His disciples and when He is with sinners; when He speaks and when He preaches; when He goes forth and when He sits down; when He sleeps and when He wakes; when He eats and when He serves others; when He heals the sick, and when He does His other miracles: setting forth to thyself in thy heart His ways and His doings, how humbly He bore Himself among men, how tenderly among His disciples, how pitiful He was to the poor, to whom He made Himself like in all things, and who seemed to be His own special family: how He despised none nor shrunk from them, not even from the leper; how He paid no court to the rich, how free He was from the cares of the world, and from trouble about the needs of the body; how patient under insult, and how gentle in answering, for He sought not to maintain His

cause by keen and bitter words, but with gentle and humble answer to cure another's malice: what composure in all His behaviour, what anxiety for the salvation of souls, for the love of whom also He deigned to die; how He offered Himself as the pattern of all that is good; how compassionate He was to the afflicted, how He condescended to the imperfection of the weak, how He despised not sinners; how mercifully He received the penitent, how dutiful He was to His parents, how ready in serving all, according to His own words, 'I am among you as he that doth serve;' how He shunned all display and show of singularity, how He avoided all occasions of offence; how temperate in eating and drinking, how modest in appearance, how earnest in prayer, how sober in His watching, how patient of toil and want; how peaceful and calm in all things.'

¹ Translated from Ludolfus de Saxonia (1330), *Proem. in Vitam Christi*: quoted in '*Vita Vitae nostrae meditantibus proposita*.' H. J. Coleridge 1869.

‘Be it unto me according to Thy word.’ It is the human echo of that Divine self-surrender of our Pattern and Head—‘Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.’ May it be the answer, again and again renewed, of all of us, old and young. May the Pastor of pastors, whose eye is equally on those of us whose course is ending, and on those whose course is beginning, deepen in the hearts of all the Image of His own most perfect and holy life. May He pity and guide us in our ignorance and our failures. May He who only can, help us to do, each of us our appointed work, and to fulfil His gracious purpose in giving it to us to do.

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